

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

# Handbook

Spring 2021

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## Administration and Structure of Postdoctoral Affairs at Ohio State

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) at Ohio State was established in July 2017 by the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA), the Office of Research, and the Graduate School in response to the growing needs of the University to address the unique concerns of the postdoctoral community at the Ohio State. The OPA operates under both the Office of Research and the Graduate School to reflect that fact that postdoctoral training is an essential component of the research enterprise at the university and that this period represents the last stage of formal training as postdoctoral trainees move along their career path. The faculty director of the OPA reports to both the Senior Associate Vice-President for Research and the Dean of the Graduate School.

The operational funding for the office is provided by OAA while the funding to support the Presidential Postdoctoral Scholars Program is provided by the Office of the President. As of July 1, 2018, the OPA receives support from the Graduate School in the areas of fiscal management and human resources, and from OAA in the areas of information technology and communications.

The OPA is overseen by a Faculty Director appointed part time who provides leadership and promotes and supports the mission of the OPA. The Faculty Director supervises the Administrative Director of the office who is a full-time employee responsible for the operation and management of the office. The Administrative Director supervises a full time Program Assistant and a team of student assistants.

## Mission and Vision of Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

Both the mission and vision of the office is aligned with the university vision and mission statement as we support the postdoctoral research and training environment at Ohio State.

### Mission

To prepare the next generation of research leaders by enhancing the postdoctoral experience at Ohio State through promotion of career development opportunities, advancing the quality of the training environment for postdoctoral scholars, and providing resources and support to scholars and their faculty mentors.

## Vision

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs will provide world class research support by as the model program for career development and support of postdoctoral scholars at a land grant research institution.

## Shared Values

The shared values of the OPA are grounded in the university's values and include:

- Excellence in postdoctoral training and mentoring
- Diversity in the postdoctoral workforce expanding all dimensions of diversity (gender, religious beliefs, race, marital status, ethnicity, parental status, age, education, physical and mental ability, income, sexual orientation, among others) to ensure diversity of ideas
- Inclusive workspaces that allow postdoctoral trainees from any background thrive in their discipline
- Innovative approaches to career development that include and go beyond preparing postdoctoral trainees for the traditional tenure-track positions
- Fostering multidisciplinary research and scholarship by encouraging collaboration and mentoring beyond departments and beyond the university
- Integrity, transparency, and trust that ensures responsible practices and conduct
- Work-life balance that acknowledges that postdoctoral trainees will be most productive when they achieve balance with all other aspects of their lives

## Key Partners of the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

### Postdoctoral Association

The OPA works closely with the Postdoctoral Association (PDA), a grassroots postdoc organization providing representation and liaison between its members and the administration of the Ohio State University (<https://u.osu.edu/postdocs/>). The membership of the PDA governs the activities of the group and directly elects the leadership of the PDA. The OPA interacts with the PDA for many reasons, including to better understand the needs of the postdoctoral community and to develop additional career development programming. The OPA and PDA are distinct organizations that have aligned goals of improving the environment for Postdoctoral Scholars at Ohio State.

## Postdoctoral Advisory Council

Another important partner for the OPA is the Postdoctoral Advisory Council (PAC) that includes faculty and staff from around the University who have responsibility for Postdoctoral Scholars in their respective campus units. The PAC provides an important mechanism to receive feedback and guidance from the campus community. This is an advisory body that raises concerns about the postdoctoral community, provides input on OPA initiatives, supports OPA programming in their local unit and disseminates information about OPA initiatives. PAC members are invited to serve by the OPA for yearlong terms that are renewable. The membership can be variable; however it should consist of approximately 10 members and should include a representative from each college that employs more than 5% of the total postdoctoral community at Ohio State. Additional PAC members can include representatives from institutes and other units that house a significant number of postdocs or have a specific interest in the postdoctoral community. The PAC will meet at least quarterly throughout the calendar year.

## Office of Postdoctoral Research

The Office of Postdoctoral Research (OPR) is an office in the Ohio State College of Medicine that focuses on the specific needs of postdocs within the College of Medicine (<https://medicine.osu.edu/research/opportunities/postdoctoral>). The OPR focuses on supporting the postdoctoral researchers who work at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center with research focusing on basic, translational and clinical areas of the biomedical sciences. The OPA partners with the OPR to highlight the wide variety of postdoctoral opportunities at Ohio State. The OPR has a goal of offering unparalleled institutional support, guidance from seasoned faculty mentors and the springboard for career advancement in academia or industry. This includes assisting postdocs to find funding and resources, facilitating grant applications and providing information about benefits available to postdocs in the College of Medicine.

## Definition of Postdoctoral Scholars

The National Postdoctoral Association, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) have agreed to the following definition of a postdoc:

*A postdoctoral scholar ("postdoc") is an individual holding a doctoral degree who is engaged in a temporary period of mentored research and/or scholarly training for the purpose of acquiring the professional skills needed to pursue a career path of his or her choosing.*

In keeping with this definition, The Ohio State University ("University") defines a Postdoctoral Scholar as an individual who meets the following criteria:

- the appointee was recently (3 years or less) awarded a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate (e.g., Sc.D., M.D.) in an appropriate field from an accredited domestic or foreign institution;
- For some disciplines where terminal degrees frequently are Masters rather than Doctoral degrees (e.g. Masters of Fine Arts, etc.) a postdoc does not necessarily have to hold a Doctoral degree
- the appointment is five years or less
- the appointment involves substantially full-time research or scholarship
- the appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time academic and/or research career
- the appointee works under the supervision of an advisor with appropriate expertise and training or an academic unit at the University
- the appointee is expected to publish the results of his or her research or scholarship during the period of the appointment, in consultation with his or her mentor

Postdoctoral Scholars can be funded by:

- A research grant awarded to a faculty member
- University origin funds
- A fellowship or traineeship for postdoctoral study given to the trainee by an extramural agency and the fellowship or traineeship is paid through a University account. This includes institutional research training grants

## Salary and Effort

Effective September 1, 2019, minimum salaries for all Postdoctoral Scholars must be at least \$48,000 per year (\$4,000 per month). For additional current information and FAQs related to the minimum salary policy please go [here](#).

Units are responsible for establishing the criteria for determining the salaries of individual Postdoctoral Scholars within the norms of the unit. Such criteria may include, but are not limited to, the individual's qualifications, experience, performance as a Postdoctoral Scholar, funding availability in the discipline, and competitive salaries and stipends paid by other universities. However, the salary cannot be under the minimum mentioned above.

## Provision of Minimum Pay Level for Externally Funded Postdoctoral Scholars

When extramural agencies establish stipends at a rate less than the university-established pay minimum, and the University elects to proceed with such an appointment, the unit is required to provide additional funding to bring the pay level of the Postdoctoral Scholar up to the

established minimum. The mentor is required to arrange the additional funding before the appointment start date.

## Exceeding the Maximum

The maximum salary for a Postdoctoral Scholar is \$80,000. The unit may approve a salary for a Postdoctoral Scholar above the top of the authorized scale in exceptional instances. This may include specific disciplines where a competitive market requires increased stipends to attract researchers into postdoctoral positions. Under these circumstances there is an exception process available through HR information.

## Annual Pay Increases

Salary increases may be given annually to Postdoctoral Scholars on the basis of merit in accordance with [established procedures](#) that apply to all employees of Ohio State. Annual pay increases for Postdoctoral Scholars are encouraged to conform with the guidance provided by the National Institutes of Health. An annual guidance document is issued by the NIH to indicate the preferred salary level for postdocs based on their level of experience:

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-20-070.html>

Pay increases to Postdoctoral Scholars funded by fellowships should be provided in accordance with the provisions of the extramural funding agency and the grant agreement. Most federally funded training grants for postdocs contain provisions requiring a yearly pay increase.

## Effort Percentage for Postdoctoral Scholars

Appointments to the Postdoctoral Scholar title are full time (100% FTE), based on the expectation that the Postdoctoral Scholar will be fully involved in scholarly pursuits. Individuals are limited to holding a single appointment. In special cases, upon written request of the appointee and concurrence of the mentor, Human Resources may approve a temporary title change when the appointee is unable to make a full-time commitment for reasons of health, family responsibilities, or employment external to the University. Such a request must take into account extramural funding agency requirements, if any.

When a reduced-time appointment has been approved, the mentor and Postdoctoral Scholar shall sign a written agreement specifying the reduction in hours of work and concomitant responsibilities and compensation. This agreement should be approved by HR in consultation with the OPA before changes are made to the appointment.



## Hiring and Offer Letters

The recruitment of Postdoctoral Scholars to the university must follow the policy established by Human Resources (see HR policy at <https://hr.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/policy410.pdf>)

Appointments are typically made for a one-year term, renewable for up to four additional years (for a total of 5 years) as they are term appointments (see HR policy at <https://hr.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/policy420.pdf>). Templates can be found [here](#). When preparing offer letters and associated Visa applications the topic of research for the postdoctoral scholar should be kept as broad as possible to avoid potential administrative issues if there are changes to research projects in the future. Thus, excessive details and descriptions of the research to be done should be avoided, rather broad categories of research should be proposed.

## Terms and Conditions of Postdoctoral Offers

The following are important terms and conditions that apply to all Postdoctoral Scholar offers at Ohio State. Postdoctoral Scholars must receive this information with the offer letter of appointment at Ohio State. By signing the offer letter, the department, faculty PI and the postdoctoral scholar acknowledge the following terms as conditions of appointment.

Note that Postdoctoral Scholars must have received their terminal degree to be hired. Verification of degree is part of the background check conducted by HR.

## Funding

The postdoctoral scholar financial support constitutes a salary, which is subject to all applicable employment taxes. If the funding for the position is partially or fully comprised of fellowship support, this may require identifying other funding sources to cover benefits that the sponsor does not allow to be charged to the fellowship.

Ohio State expanded benefits eligibility for Postdoctoral Scholars supported by individual or institutional fellowships. Consequently, a common position title (postdoctoral scholar) and job classification (unclassified term staff) will be used for all postdoctoral positions regardless of their funding source.

These positions will use the composite benefit rate for A&P staff. **Some funding agencies will only allow certain benefits to be charged to the fellowship funds.** Therefore, another allowable source of funding needs to be secured to cover whatever costs the fellowship will not cover. The source of additional funding can be the college, department, or postdoctoral mentor's funds. The principal investigator on the fellowship application is responsible for securing this funding. The postdoctoral scholar will not be appointed if all the benefits are not covered by a funding source.

Please work closely with your departmental fellowship grants manager and/or HR representative to understand what costs will not be covered by the fellowship and how to configure the funding of the appointment.

The appointment process in place for individuals supported by fellowships is not in conflict with the requirements by funders such as NIH.

Questions regarding this new policy can be directed to [osupostdocs@osu.edu](mailto:osupostdocs@osu.edu)

## Effort

All postdoctoral positions are 100% FTE and FLSA exempt. If funding is provided by more than one source an explicit agreement on how to allocate effort for assigned projects is required. The appointment cannot be split, but the funding can be split if it comes from more than one source.

## Medical insurance

Postdoctoral Scholars must be covered by a medical insurance plan during the term of their appointment. In order to secure medical coverage through The Ohio State University Faculty and Staff Health Plan, they must enroll within 30 days of their appointment start date, within 30 days of a qualifying status change, or during an annual Open Enrollment period. If they have coverage from another source, and they are international scholars, they must provide proof of other insurance plan coverage for visa purposes. Please contact OIA for more information regarding waiving Ohio State's coverage.

The university-sponsored medical plans provide comprehensive coverage and wellness benefits for Postdoctoral Scholars and their eligible dependents. All Ohio State medical plan options include preventive care with 100% coverage. From the available plan options, individuals choose which medical coverage and benefit levels best match their needs.

## Notice of Appointment

A Postdoctoral Scholar shall be provided a written notice of appointment, which shall include the mentor's name, begin and end dates of the appointment, whether the appointment is renewable and the conditions for renewal, salary amount, source of funding, and work eligibility requirements for U.S. citizens and non-citizens. A copy of this present document and a summary of benefits, or corresponding website information, shall accompany the appointment notice. The Postdoctoral Scholar is required to accept the appointment in writing. Sample letters can be found [here](#).

## Leave Policies

- Eligible faculty and staff (including Postdoctoral Scholars) may receive parental leave immediately upon hire. There is no required length of service requirement to be eligible for parental leave. Learn more about eligibility details in the [benefits website](#).
- Postdoctoral Scholars will earn vacation leave in accordance with the unclassified A&P [accrual schedule](#).
- Postdoctoral Scholars are eligible to accrue sick leave and are eligible for vacation donation.
- Specific postdoctoral fellowships may have requirements that relate to the amount of leave time available to awardees. Postdoctoral Scholars requiring specific leave policies by a sponsor can contact the OPA for additional assistance. Details on the leave policies of NIH sponsored fellowship appears here: [NIH Parental Leave Policy](#)

The [Paid Leave Programs policy](#) includes the details about all leave policies.

## Participation in career development activities

The federal government put forward important [policy clarifications in 2014](#) which permits postdoctoral trainees to take time for professional development while on federal research grants. This policy creates an obligation for release time to allow for appropriate career development opportunities as part of the “dual role” of the postdoc (as both an employee and a trainee). As Sally Rockey from the NIH stated: “This dual role is critical in order to provide Post-Docs with sufficient experience and mentoring for them to successfully pursue independent careers in research and related fields.”

## Corrective Action, Termination, and Resignation Policies

### Corrective Action

The university subscribes to the principle of performance improvement that is typically progressive in nature when performance is deficient, as described in the [Performance Improvement Process Guide](#). In appropriate cases, the university reserves the right to move to immediate termination when warranted. Postdoctoral Scholars are unclassified staff and should refer to the procedures in the Corrective Action and Involuntary Termination Policy. For more information on the policy, visit the [human resources website](#).

For resources on navigating a performance improvement process you can review [Improving My Performance \(Employee Guide\)](#)

## Notice of Termination

If a postdoctoral appointment is terminated for performance or conduct, the termination will be in accordance to the [Corrective Action and Involuntary Termination Policy](#). In instances due to lack of funding, the employee will be provided advance notice where applicable pursuant to the [Reduction in Force policy 9.15](#).

Questions or concerns can be directed to [Employee and Labor Relations](#).

Postdoctoral Scholars who are involuntarily terminated or who resign in lieu of involuntary termination may be deemed ineligible for rehire. Postdoctoral Scholars who are ineligible for rehire must be notified in writing of their rehire ineligibility by the department at the time of termination.

## Notice of Resignation

If a Postdoctoral Scholar resigns prior to the end of the appointment, he or she should provide a written two-week notice. Postdoctoral appointees must leave all research and instructional materials with the faculty supervisor to ensure continuation of the project or teaching assignment and compliance with relevant University and sponsor policies. However, some research and instructional materials may be taken by the Postdoctoral Scholar if there is a mutual agreement with the faculty supervisor. This is common when the Postdoctoral Scholar is moving to start their own research/scholarship program. At the discretion of the college/department, access to these data and materials may be provided to the appointee. This may include the ability to maintain copies of research and teaching materials if this has been approved by the appropriate mechanisms at the college/department.

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

A core value of The Ohio State University is supporting diversity in people and ideas. The goal is to create an inclusive, supportive community where Postdoctoral Scholars can comfortably join in or confidently stand out. Since its inception, the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) designed its programs and activities with diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) as guiding principles.

More details about the OPA's efforts in this area can be found in the [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#) page of the OPA's website.

More about [Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Employment](#) can be found in the [Office of Institutional Equity website](#). This website also provides links to report harassment and discrimination based on age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy, protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law.

[The ADA Coordinator's Office](#) processes accommodations for staff, faculty, and visitors to the University, and addresses accessibility issues and reports of disability-based discrimination on campus.

## International Postdoctoral Trainees

Most international Postdoctoral Scholars are appointed in a J-1 status. J-1 Scholars who are transferring from another appointment must maintain continuous active status (breaks in J-1 program eligibility are not permitted). When appointing an international Postdoctoral Scholar, the department must request a visa through the Office of International Affairs. To learn more about J-1 visas please visit the Office of International Affairs [J1-B visa page](#). International Postdoctoral Scholars may also be approved for an H-1B visa status, to learn more about H-1B visas please visit the Office of International Affairs [H1-B visa page](#).

When preparing visa applications, the topic of research for the Postdoctoral Scholar should be kept as broad as possible to avoid potential administrative issues if there are changes to research projects in the future. Thus, excessive details and descriptions of the research to be done should be avoided, rather broad categories of research should be proposed.

The OPA is aware that the international postdoctoral community has specific needs that need to be addressed. The OPA has created programs and initiatives in collaboration with the Postdoctoral Association for international trainees. More information can be found on the [OPA's website](#).

## Teaching by Postdoctoral Scholars

Postdoctoral Scholars should consider the following regarding teaching during postdoctoral training:

1. Postdoctoral positions in some disciplines can involve teaching as a component of their position to allow them to prepare for their next career step. Under those conditions, alternative job titles that allow for teaching should be considered.
2. To be compensated for teaching done on campus (i.e. at Ohio State), the funding of the postdoctoral scholar's appointment would need to be split. If they are employing 10% of their time teaching, then the unit benefiting from their teaching will be responsible for paying 10% of their salary and benefits, and their advisor/department will pay for 90%. *You should not create a second 0% FTE appointment for the Postdoctoral Scholar under*

*those conditions.* **Note:** Their appointment *cannot* be split. They must remain as a 100% FTE employee in their unit. This is particularly important for international postdocs who are on visas such as J1 or H1-B.

3. If they teach outside of Ohio State, Postdoctoral Scholars will do this in addition to the requirements of their position at Ohio State. They will likely have to be hired as an adjunct by the institution they are teaching for. This is typically not an option for Postdoctoral Scholars who are not US citizens or permanent residents.
4. If they are funded by a fellowship, teaching must not be forbidden by their funder.

## Conflict Resolution

It is desirable for all parties concerned to make serious attempts to resolve disputes informally. This is particularly true for disputes that occur in a relationship of great importance, such as that between a Postdoctoral Scholar and mentor. Many conflicts are resolved at the departmental level working with local human resources representatives, the department chair, or other appropriate departmental administrators. There are many additional resources available to assist Postdoctoral Scholars in the informal resolution of problems. Resources are listed in the [OPA website](#). Other helpful resources include the OPA, Office of Human Resources, and for international trainees, the Office of International Affairs. Contacting these units during the early signs of conflict can be beneficial for effective resolution of concerns.

Employee and Labor Relations assists in resolving problems and conflicts in the workplace before they escalate to a disruption. Employee and Labor Relations Senior Representatives are available to provide problem-solving strategies to managers, human resource professionals, or employees involved in conflict. They can also assist in facilitating informal mediation. Conflict in the workplace can arise in a wide variety of ways. It can range from workplace misunderstandings, very mild interpersonal problems, to serious conflicts. [For more information contact your Employee and Labor Relations Senior Representative.](#)

## Advertising and Promoting Postdoctoral Positions

The OPA assists faculty in promoting and advertising postdoctoral positions that open in their research groups. Ad templates are available on the [OPA website](#), as well as a form to provide the OPA the necessary information to allow the staff to advertise the position in several networks.

## Sources of Postdoctoral Funding

The OPA advocates for the creation of postdoctoral funding opportunities in the university. Currently an internal funding program is managed by the OPA: [The Presidential Postdoctoral](#)

[Scholars Program](#). Additional opportunities, including extramural sources of funding for postdoctoral trainees are also [listed](#) and disseminated by the OPA.

## Fellowship and Grant Writing Resources

Postdoctoral Scholars, faculty, and staff can find fellowship and grant writing resources on our website [here](#). The OPA will continue to add materials and information to this section. Suggestions can be made at [osupostdocs@osu.edu](mailto:osupostdocs@osu.edu)

### Considerations when applying for postdoctoral fellowships

Ohio State provides extensive benefits eligibility for postdoctoral scholars who are supported by any funding source, including individual or institutional fellowships. Consequently, a common position title (Postdoctoral Scholar) and job classification (unclassified term staff) is used for all postdoctoral positions regardless of their funding source.

Postdoctoral Scholar positions should use the composite benefit rate for A&P staff. **Some funding agencies will only allow certain benefits to be charged to the fellowship funds.** Therefore, another allowable source of funding needs to be secured to cover whatever costs the fellowship will not cover. The source of additional funding can be the college, department, or funds controlled by the postdoctoral mentor. The principal investigator on the fellowship application is responsible for securing this funding. The postdoctoral scholar will not be appointed if all the benefits are not covered by a funding source.

### NRSA Benefit Calculator

We have created a tool to help units and individuals calculate the cost of benefits when preparing NIH fellowship application budgets. The file can be downloaded [here](#)

## Best Practices for Postdoctoral Training and Programs

While Postdoctoral Scholars are responsible for their career trajectory and success, faculty members are expected to initiate and provide on-going mentoring, guidance, and resources, in both scientific and career development, to support their postdoctoral trainees towards their goals successfully. Mentors/PIs should initiate those conversations and discuss research direction, progress and career goals. Postdoctoral trainees are encouraged to request those conversations if they are not already taking place.

The ultimate goal of postdoctoral training is to prepare the trainee to be an independent researcher/scholar. Thus faculty not only need to mentor and train these individuals, but also

allow them to develop their own research program or scholarship with the understanding that they'll take this with them to their next position.

Some trainees may decide to go in a non-academic or non-research direction, in which case faculty may not have the knowledge of skills to make that happen. However, they can be supportive of the trainee's decision and work out a strategy by which the trainee delivers the output required by their funding source while preparing for a career change as their next step.

## 1. Responsibilities of Faculty Mentors

A faculty mentor inviting a Postdoctoral Scholar to Ohio State is expected to follow the best practice of working with their trainees to develop a plan of research and goals for the period of training in connection with the initial term of appointment and ongoing basis. The faculty member approves this plan, and during the term of the appointment ensures adequate office/research space. In addition, faculty members are expected to:

- a) Prepare a mentoring plan for the upcoming year based on the Individual Development Plan (IDP) Postdoctoral Scholars generate before or at the start of their positions.
- b) Carry out an annual formal research progress and career mentoring discussion (annual review). Prior to the review, postdoctoral trainees should revise their IDP and after the review a new mentoring plan for the new year should be generated considering the new IDP.

The annual review should include:

- An assessment of the Postdoctoral Scholar progress to date, strengths, areas needing improvement, potential for a research career in the discipline, and a summary of expectations and activities for the following year;
  - A written summary of the review that needs to be provided to and signed by the Postdoctoral Scholar;
  - A review will be conducted whenever a salary increase is proposed for a Postdoctoral Scholar;
  - Any written evaluation will be maintained by the department, school or other central office.
- c) Encourage Postdoctoral Scholar to seek secondary mentors who could provide them with opportunities in new areas of research, foster collaboration and offer them with guidance and support to assist with their career goals.
  - d) Seek the participation of these secondary mentors or multiple other faculty members in the annual progress reviews.
  - e) Encourage Postdoctoral Scholars to participate in career development activities (workshops, courses, pre-conference events), recognizing that the short postdoctoral training period requires seeking such information early in the training period.
  - f) Encourage Postdoctoral Scholar to engage in social networking opportunities, such as attendance of talks and seminars in the department and University-wide.



## 2. Responsibilities of Postdoctoral Scholars

Postdoctoral Scholars are ultimately responsible for ensuring they develop the skills and resources to effectively move into their next career step. Therefore, Postdoctoral Scholars are expected to carry out the study or research outlined with the faculty mentor, to communicate regularly with the faculty mentor on the status of the research, and to notify the faculty mentor of any change in plans. The Postdoctoral Scholar is not expected to handle administrative duties for the faculty mentor or the lab/research group, or to be on a dissertation reading committee for any graduate student. The trainee is expected to continue his/her development toward independence.

## 3. Joint Responsibilities

To facilitate the postdoctoral mentoring process, Postdoctoral Scholars and their faculty mentors (PIs) are expected to hold at least three formal one-on-one meetings that are not part of larger research team meetings:

- a) An initial meeting at the start of the postdoctoral appointment is a formal discussion within the first 4 weeks of the appointment, with the goal of understanding career-orientation, setting short-term objectives, defining research project responsibilities, and appraising existing knowledge and skills and the need of new knowledge and skills. In addition, it is crucial to align expectations by using a mentoring compact at the start of the postdoctoral appointment. See examples below.
  - [Association of American Medical Colleges](#) 2017 version
  - [Other examples](#)
- b) Annual meeting(s) to discuss progress, preferably a formal discussion after the calendar New Year. Secondary mentors or other faculty mentors are also encouraged to attend. The goal of this meeting is to review progress, evaluate prior set plans and accomplishments, regarding both research and career goals, and determine goals for the following year.
- c) Exit interview at the conclusion of the appointment is a discussion upon resignation or end of appointment, where it would be an opportunity to address future research trajectories; differentiation strategies if the postdoctoral trainee is pursuing the same lines of research as the faculty mentors; and possible opportunities or plans for collaboration.
- d) Complete the online exit survey provided by the OPA following the exit interview.

[Mentoring plans templates](#) and [IDP information and resources](#) are available at the OPA website.

## 4. Mentoring skills

There are many resources available to Postdoctoral Scholars and faculty mentors to develop their mentorship skills. The OPA offers multiple opportunities to enhance these skills. Strong mentorship has been linked to enhanced mentee productivity, self-efficacy, career satisfaction, and is an important predictor of the academic success of scientists and engineers in training. The Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experiences in Research (CIMER) has developed a curriculum based on proven mentorship development curricula.

Federal funding agencies are calling for evidence-based development of mentoring skills as an important component of successful grant proposals. By participating in these workshops faculty will develop and/or enhance their mentoring skills and receive resources and materials to support effective mentoring of graduate students and postdoctoral trainees.

This type of preparation is required for some faculty who plan to submit nominations for the President's Postdoctoral Scholars Program and for many federal training grants. More information about this effort can be found in the OPA's [website](#). Additional information on best mentoring practices can be found in many places, including at the [National Academies](#) and their [online guide](#).

## 5. White House Office of Management and Budget: Dual Role of Postdocs

The OMB put forward important [policy clarifications in 2014](#) which not only permits postdoctoral trainees to take time for professional development while on federal research grants, but the policy creates an obligation for release time as part of the "dual role" of the postdoc (both employee and trainee) to provide postdocs with sufficient training and mentoring for them to successfully pursue their next career steps.

## 6. National Postdoc Association (NPA): Core competencies

The NPA has established six core competencies to offer guidance to individual postdoctoral scholars who must seek out relevant training experiences, in collaboration with mentors, institutions, and other advisors who provide this training. "Competency" has been defined as "an acquired personal skill that is demonstrated in [one's] ability to provide a consistently adequate or high level of performance in a specific job function." These competencies are meant to serve primarily as: (1) a basis for self-evaluation by Postdoctoral Scholars, and (2) a basis for developing training opportunities that can be evaluated by mentors, institutions, and other advisors. These six core competencies are:

1. Discipline-specific conceptual knowledge

2. Research skill development
3. Communication skills
4. Professionalism
5. Leadership and management skills
6. Responsible conduct of research

A full definition of these competencies and information of how to assess progress on these can be found here:

[Complete Core Competencies Document](#)

[Competencies Checklist](#)

[National Academies: Responsibilities of Postdocs](#)