

**UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO DIVISION OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES AND  
PRITZKER SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**

**POSTDOCTORAL TRAINING GUIDELINES**

Postdoctoral appointment at The University of Chicago, Division of Biological Sciences provides the recent graduate (PhD, MD, or MD/PhD) with an opportunity to expand educational training in preparation for a career of independent research. Postdoctoral trainees are appointed based on source of funding to one of two positions *Postdoctoral Fellow* or *Postdoctoral Scholar*. The University of Chicago's longstanding tradition of faculty scholarship, coupled with extraordinary library facilities and laboratory resources provides a rich environment to foster intellectual growth while contributing to the research mission of the Biological Sciences Division.

These guidelines are intended to aid in the implementation of the Divisional policy which commits to the development of terms and conditions for postdoctoral trainee appointments which are consistent between Postdoctoral Fellow and Postdoctoral Scholar titles and permit reappointment between titles without loss of access to benefits. These guidelines have been developed as part of a comprehensive review of postdoctoral positions in the BSD. These guidelines do not address postdoctoral *Research Professional* staff positions. However, there is a short description of these positions at the end and more information can be obtained from the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA).

**Compensation guidelines for Postdoctoral Trainees**

The BSD has adopted the NIH NRSA Postdoctoral Stipend schedule as the basis for compensation for all postdoctoral trainees. The annually adjusted NIH NRSA schedule is used to determine compensation for postdoctoral trainees with a delayed effective date of July 1 each year.

All newly hired postdoctoral trainees shall be paid an amount which is no less than the minimum amount established by the NIH NRSA schedule in effect at the time of appointment. Thus, the minimum allowable compensation for postdoctoral trainees with appointments commencing during July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, is \$61,008.

This policy is intended to establish minimum compensation. It is presumed that postdoctoral trainees will be fairly compensated throughout the period of training. Compensation shall be adjusted each year at the time of re-appointment to equal the NIH NRSA minimum applicable to years of service for continuing postdoctoral trainees.

**Postdoctoral Scholar**

Postdoctoral Scholars (PDSs) are Divisional appointments with some staff benefits intended for postdoctoral training and are generally supported by restricted funds. PDS appointments are generally for a 12-month term. Each PDS will have a primary faculty sponsor who is responsible for developing a mentoring program for the trainee with clearly established expectations and goals.

Eligibility:

- PDSs should have received a doctoral degree within five years of commencement of a PDS's term (the time attributed to house staff or clinical fellowships is not considered, and, in extraordinary circumstances, the time in postdoctoral training in a different area of scientific specialty may be adjusted)
- PDSs may be citizens/permanent residents of the United States or foreign nationals who hold an F-1, J-1, or H-1B BCIS visa classification. PDSs must have a current faculty member at the University of Chicago as the sponsor
- PDSs are eligible for reappointment if, the PDS remains in the faculty sponsor's laboratory for a second (or subsequent) year; is in good standing, having documented progress towards training goals; and if the faculty sponsor's funding continues to support the appointment.

Term Limit: PDSs may not generally hold this status (or any combination of relevant postdoctoral experience at the University of Chicago or elsewhere) for longer than five years. Reasonable exemptions may be made to this term limit upon approval of the Dean of Postdoctoral Affairs if it is in the best interest of the postdoc's career goals, see section on *Exemptions to Term Limits* for further details.

Training: PDSs will receive a training commitment from the faculty sponsor and will be periodically reviewed for purposes of evaluation and setting goals for the training experience.

Compensation: Compensation for PDSs will be generally consistent with the NIH/NRSA levels in accordance with the BSD Compensation Guidelines for Postdoctoral Trainees. Salary is paid monthly.

Benefits: PDSs are eligible for university staff benefits (excepting the Employer-Assisted Housing Program, Staff Loan Program, Laboratory Schools, reduced University of Chicago tuition, and commuter pre-tax benefits).

Leave Policy: PDSs are entitled to four weeks of compensated vacation leave during each 12-month term appointment, and up to 12 days of compensated sick leave per 12-month term. Use of leave time must be coordinated with the faculty sponsor and must be taken during the term of appointment. There shall be no accruals of either vacation leave or sick leave beyond the term of appointment. Six weeks (30 workdays) of paid Parental Leave after birth or adoption of a child. Postdocs eligible for FMLA shall have FMLA time run concurrently with Parental Leave.

Sick leave may be used for absences for the Postdoctoral Scholar's own medical care, treatment, diagnosis, or preventive medical care. It may also be used for absences due to a Family Member's (as defined below) illness or injury or to care for a Family Member receiving medical care, treatment, diagnosis, or preventive medical care. Postdoctoral Scholars may also use Sick Leave if they or a Family Member are a victim of domestic violence or a sex offense or if they need to care for a child whose school or place of care has been closed by order of a public official due to a public health emergency. Absences of less than one full day are not deducted from a Postdoctoral Scholar's Sick Leave allotment.

For the purposes of this policy, “Family Member” means a Postdoctoral Scholar’s child, legal guardian, ward, spouse under the laws of any state, domestic partner, parent, spouse or domestic partner’s parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, or any other individual related by blood or whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship. A child includes not only a biological relationship, but also a relationship resulting from an adoption, step-relationship, and/or foster care relationship, or a child to whom the employee stands in loco parentis. A parent includes a biological, foster, stepparent, adoptive parent, legal guardian of an employee, or a person who stood in loco parentis when the employee was a minor child. Please note that this definition of “Family Member” does not apply to any other University policy, except where stated.

Family Leave Policy – PDSs may combine accrued vacation and sick leave for a total of approximately 6 weeks. PDSs are also eligible for Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) after 1 year of employment.

Administrative appointment: To initiate appointment, the Faculty Sponsor shall submit the following documentation to the Office of Academic Affairs:

- Department endorsement of the appointment as a training experience
- Description of the training/mentoring commitment and terms for evaluation
- Compliance Screening certification
- Citizenship form and appropriate visa documentation
- Health Insurance enrollment form or proof of health insurance coverage
- Current curriculum vitae
- Completed “5-point” memorandum, for MD/PhD candidates addressing the restrictions on patient care.

Decisional rights: Appointment of a PDS requires the recommendation of the Department and/or Faculty Sponsor depending on Departmental policy, and approval by the Dean.

## **Postdoctoral Fellow**

Postdoctoral Fellows (PDFs) are Divisional appointments to formal postdoctoral training programs funded through training grants or fellowships. PDF appointments are generally for a 12-month term, with annual reappointment up to a maximum of five postdoctoral training years (including postdoctoral training at another institution). PDFs perform no services for the University and are not considered to be employees of the University. The primary purpose of the PDF appointment is the postdoctoral training experience. PDFs receive payment in the form of a stipend from the University or directly from an external funding source(s). The source of the stipend must be a training grant, fellowship, or other source specifically designated for the award of stipend for support during a designated period of postdoctoral training experience. The PDF is granted for the purpose of aiding in the pursuit of study or training to advance the education or training of the fellow.

### Eligibility:

- PDFs should have received a doctoral degree within five years of the commencement of the PDF’s term (the time attributed to house staff or clinical fellowships is not considered, and, in extraordinary circumstances, the time in postdoctoral training in a different area of scientific specialty may be adjusted)

- PDFs may be citizens/permanent residents of the United States (for NIH NRSAs & Training Grants), or foreign nationals who hold an F-1 or J-1 BCIS visa classification, dependent on the specific criteria of the fellowship award. (*Because H-1B visas are employment-based visas, individuals with an H-1B visa status may not be appointed as a PDF*)
- PDFs must have a current University of Chicago faculty member as their sponsor
- PDFs are eligible for reappointment if the PDF remains in the faculty sponsor's laboratory for a second (or subsequent) year; remains in good standing with documented progress towards training goals; and so long as appropriate funding continues to support the appointment

Term Limit: PDFs may not hold this status (or any combination of relevant postdoctoral experience at the University of Chicago or elsewhere) for longer than five years. Reasonable exemptions may be made to this term limit upon approval of the Dean of Postdoctoral Affairs if it is in the best interest of the postdoc's career goals, see section on *Exemptions to Term Limits* for further details.

Training: For externally funded fellowships, the Postdoctoral faculty sponsor will follow the specific guidelines of the external fellowship in conjunction with the University Research Administration (URA) guidelines. For PDF's funded by NIH training grants, the Postdoctoral faculty sponsor will follow the specific guidelines of the NIH training grant director.

Stipend: PDFs will be provided a training stipend which is generally consistent with the postdoctoral experience at NIH NRSA levels.

Supplement: Effective January 1, 2004, PDFs in the Biological Sciences Division were provided a supplemental stipend to assist in the purchase of health coverage, where not otherwise provided, and other optional coverages including dental, life, short- and long-term disability coverage, and retirement savings. This supplemental stipend is provided to give parity in living support between PDFs and Postdoctoral Scholars, who receive these benefits from the University of Chicago as employees. The faculty sponsor is responsible for providing the supplemental stipend from appropriate available funds.

All PDFs are required to have full health insurance coverage during the term of the fellowship. Where a PDF receives health insurance coverage or funding for health insurance coverage from a source outside of the University, the supplemental stipend amount is \$1,800 per annum (effective July 1, 2016). This amount can be used towards the purchase of optional coverage (dental, group life, short- and long-term disability, and/or retirement savings) available through the University. For fellowships that do not provide full funding for health insurance and no other source of coverage is provided or available, the supplemental stipend is \$8,500 per annum (effective July 1, 2016). This amount can be used towards the cost of required health insurance for the PDF (which may be purchased from the University) as well as any optional and/or dependent coverage (also available from the University) elected by the PDF.

Benefits: PDFs are not benefits eligible employees of the University. PDFs are entitled to purchase basic health care coverage and certain optional coverage at cost, available through the University. The supplemental stipend is intended to be used toward the cost of basic and/or optional coverage purchased by the PDF.

Leave Policy: If no leave policy is stipulated by the PDF's funding source, then BSD Guidelines may be followed. PDFs are entitled to four weeks of stipend compensated vacation leave during each 12-month term and up to 12 days of stipend compensated sick leave per 12-month term. Use of vacation leave must be coordinated with the faculty sponsor and must be taken during the term of appointment. There shall be no accruals of either vacation leave or sick leave beyond the term of appointment. Six weeks (30 workdays) of paid Parental Leave after birth or adoption of a child. (PDFs should refer to the terms of their fellowship for specific details on the leave policy, which supersedes the BSD Guidelines.)

Sick leave may be used for absences for the Postdoctoral Fellow's own medical care, treatment, diagnosis, or preventive medical care. It may also be used for absences due to a Family Member's (as defined below) illness or injury or to care for a Family Member receiving medical care, treatment, diagnosis, or preventive medical care. Postdoctoral Fellows may also use Sick Leave if they or a Family Member are a victim of domestic violence or a sex offense or if they need to care for a child whose school or place of care has been closed by order of a public official due to a public health emergency. Absences of less than one full day are not deducted from a Postdoctoral Fellow's Sick Leave allotment.

For the purposes of this policy, "Family Member" means a Postdoctoral Fellow's child, legal guardian, ward, spouse under the laws of any state, domestic partner, parent, spouse or domestic partner's parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, or any other individual related by blood or whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship. A child includes not only a biological relationship, but also a relationship resulting from an adoption, step-relationship, and/or foster care relationship, or a child to whom the employee stands in loco parentis. A parent includes a biological, foster, stepparent, adoptive parent, legal guardian of an employee, or a person who stood in loco parentis when the employee was a minor child. Please note that this definition of "Family Member" does not apply to any other University policy, except where stated.

Family Leave Policy – PDFs may combine accrued vacation and sick leave for a total of approximately 6 weeks.

Administrative appointment: To initiate appointment of a PDF, the Faculty Sponsor shall submit the following documentation to the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) via their departmental postdoctoral administrator:

- Postdoctoral Fellowship Appointment Request form which includes the following and is endorsed by the department leadership verifying that the source of funding permits support of the fellowship:
- Name of Fellow
- Department
- Faculty Sponsor (PI)
- Proposed effective date and term
- Proposed stipend including the supplemental stipend amount and source of funding
- Department endorsement of the appointment as a training experience including verification that the source of funding permits support of the fellowship
- Description of the training program

- Funding award letter outlining terms of the award
- Updated Curriculum Vitae
- Visa documentation J-1 request, if applicable.  
[https://internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/sites/internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/UPDATED%20Request for Staff or Academic J-1 Visa Document 2.pdf](https://internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/sites/internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/UPDATED%20Request%20for%20Staff%20or%20Academic%20J-1%20Visa%20Document%20.pdf)
- If candidate is an MD, a completed “5-point” memorandum addressing the restrictions on patient care.

The department postdoctoral administrator will review the appointment request and create/hire the PDF in Workday prior to submission to OAA.

The following items must be completed in Workday:

- Completed UPP192 plus applicable attachments for candidates on visa

Prior to the start of employment, the PDF must:

- Obtain UCOM compliance screening certification
- Be cleared by BSD Compliance

Within 30 days of the start date of employment the PDF must:

Enroll in health insurance via Gallagher or show proof of health insurance coverage and inform the department postdoctoral administrator what insurance is elected.

Decisional rights: Appointment of a PDF requires the recommendation of the Department and/or Faculty Sponsor, depending on Departmental policy and approval by the Dean.

## **Evaluation**

Postdoctoral fellows and scholars will complete with their faculty sponsor an annual reappointment form for purposes of evaluation, assessment and setting goals for the training experience.

## **Exemptions to Term Limits**

Qualifications for Term Limit Extensions

- I. In accordance with the University of Chicago Policy (“Stopping the Clock on Review for Promotion” 6/9/16, Faculty Handbook), PDSs and PDFs are eligible for a one-year extension concomitant with the birth or adoption of a child,
- II. With consultation and documentation that it is in the best interest of the PDS or PDF’s career development, extensions may be granted if: for PDFs, an active funding award is still in effect; the postdoc is actively seeking an academic appointment but needs to improve competitiveness; or other reasonable justification for career development.
- III. Extensions will be reviewed and granted upon approval of the Dean for Postdoctoral Affairs.

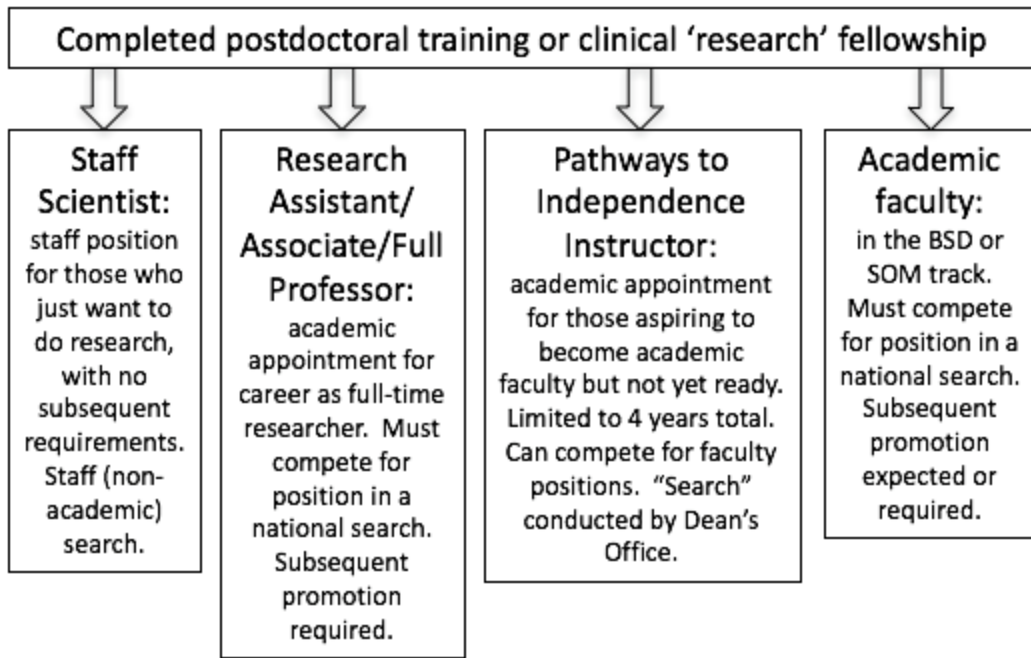
## Other Positions

After completing training, the PDS or PDF may decide to transition to a position within the BSD depending on appropriate approvals and hiring guidelines. These positions are as follows:

- I. Staff Scientist – This is a Staff research position; your departmental HR administrator can provide more details on this position.
- II. Academic Appointment: Full-time Academic Research Faculty. This level of appointment is an academic appointment for outstanding doctoral level individuals who participate in the research program of a faculty member, and for whom salary support is generally available from research grants and contracts. Advancement requires high quality scientific contributions, increasing peer recognition of high-quality scientific accomplishments and participation of research grant support. Appointees in this category are normally full-time salaried employees. The initial term of appointment can be made up to three years. <https://bsdacademicaffairs.uchicago.edu/page/9061-research-associate-assistant-professor-new-appointment>
- III. Academic Appointment: Pathways to Independence Instructor
  - a. The purpose of this appointment is to facilitate scientific independence once postdoctoral training is completed.
  - b. Researchers applying to this position should be seriously preparing or have submitted an NIH K application or other career development award toward independence.
  - c. The application for this appointment requires a departmental faculty vote and is reviewed by a BSD faculty committee. Please see the BSD OAA website for details <https://bsdacademicaffairs.uchicago.edu/page/x030-pathways-independence-instructor-new-appointment>
- IV. Academic Appointment: Academic Faculty in the BSD or SOM track. These positions are filled after a national search. Please see the BSD OAA website on academic appointments for details on the BSD and SOM tracks.  
<https://biologicalsciences.uchicago.edu/resources/oaa-bsd-track-assistant-professors>  
<https://biologicalsciences.uchicago.edu/resources/oaa-som-track-assistant-professors>

Further information on the academic appointment processes is available at - <https://biologicalsciences.uchicago.edu/resources/oaa-academic-appointment-types-and-tracks>.

The diagram below shows the titles and positions for professional researchers in the BSD from the Office of Academic Affairs.



*(BSD Postdoctoral Training Guidelines, revised 7/1/24)*