Research Fellowship for Postdoctoral Scholars - Frequently Asked Questions

How long and in-depth should the research statement be? Are there any specific guidelines?
We do not have specific guidelines. We prefer research statements that are no more than 2 pages long. There are good guidelines for writing a research statement available online: https://careerservices.upenn.edu/application-materials-for-the-faculty-job-search/research-statements-for-faculty-job-applications/.

Should the statement include a summary of past work as well as proposed research projects?
Yes; it is normal for research statements to include a summary of your research accomplishments and current work and also discusses the future direction and potential of your work.

Are applicants required to contact potential faculty collaborators and/or receive faculty approval before submitting their applications?
No; candidates need not contact faculty before applying. Applicants should explicitly name 3 faculty at Penn with whom they could potentially collaborate. We will share your application with them.

Do you have a list of faculty with whom the Fellows could potentially work?
Yes, we recommend applicants review the MindCORE Faculty listed here: https://web.sas.upenn.edu/mindcore/people/faculty/ for a sense of the current work being done at Penn, and a list of potential collaborators. That said, fellows are treated as independent investigators, and encouraged to develop research questions outside specific faculty interests. Candidates may also name a Penn faculty collaborator who is not yet listed among the MindCORE faculty, if their work is still within the scope of research related to brains and behavior.

What should be included in the cover letter?
We are mostly interested in your using this space to provide a diversity statement—1-2 paragraphs that include your past experiences and activities and/or future plans to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion at Penn. Penn offers advice on diversity statements here: https://careerservices.upenn.edu/application-materials-for-the-faculty-job-search/diversity-statements-for-faculty-job-applications/.

Keep in mind our selection criteria: scientific excellence; potential to contribute to or lead within diverse community; scientific match and interdisciplinarity; career potential.

Is this position open to international applicants that need visa support?
Yes. If you are selected as a MindCORE Fellow, we will support your visa application.

Does the program provide health insurance benefits, etc?

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Yes; Fellows receive health insurance, a relocation allowance, and a research fund of $20,000. Details of postdoc benefits at Penn are available here: https://research.upenn.edu/postdocs-and-students/benefits-and-leave/

Who will mentor the Fellows?
Fellows are independent with financial and administrative oversight through MindCORE. While Fellows are strongly encouraged to collaborate with faculty, there is no expectation that Fellows be formally affiliated with faculty research groups. Fellows will be provided with a faculty mentoring committee and included in MindCORE networking and professional development events.

To what degree can Fellows be involved in shaping the work of MindCORE (e.g., by working with speakers, designing events)?
We anticipate that Fellows will shape the research agenda (via the portfolio of projects selected) and be engaged with the research community, but do not expect Fellows to be involved in the administration of MindCORE. We are excited for the Fellows to help develop a vibrant intellectual community around mind and brain at Penn, including through the design of symposia and other activities, for which MindCORE staff may provide administrative help.

Are MindCORE Fellows required to teach classes?
No. This is a research fellowship. MindCORE Fellows have no teaching responsibilities.

What is the review process?
Following a first-round review by faculty and a faculty selection committee, a select group of candidates will be asked to provide reference letters and invited for a one-day campus visit (possibly virtual) in late February/early March where candidates will give a talk, be interviewed by the committee, and meet with Fellows and faculty. Final offers will be made following the campus visit.

My referees wants to know if it should be a concise one-page letter of recommendation or a longer letter like those for assistant professorships?
We do not have a minimum or maximum length requirement. That said, a more detailed letter is likely to be more helpful to us than a short statement of support. Note that we do not require recommendation letters for the first-round review. We will notify shortlisted candidates if/when a recommendation letter is required.

When is the start date for this position?
The earliest the position may start is July 1, 2024; the latest the position may start is January 30, 2025.

I do not yet have my PhD at the time of application – am I still eligible?
Individuals are eligible to if they will obtain their PhD before starting the position (e.g. if an applicant obtains their PhD during Fall 2024, they would still be eligible to start the position in January 2025).

Am I eligible if I am currently in a postdoctoral position or have previously had a postdoctoral position?

Yes, individuals who are currently in a postdoctoral position or previously had a postdoctoral position are eligible to apply. Note that Penn has a 5-year cap on postdoctoral length from all institutions. (Candidates ideally have been postdocs for <2 years at the time of appointment.) We could hire a candidate with 3 years of previous postdoc time (allowing for 2 years of the MindCORE Fellowship) but prefer early career trainees. Clarification on Penn's postdoc term limits is here: https://research.upenn.edu/guidance-regarding-the-cumulative-five-year-term-limit-for-newly-appointed-postdoctoral-researchers-and-fellows-effective-july-1-2023/

Can I work remotely as a MindCORE Fellow?

No. This is a campus-based position. Philly rocks!

Do you accept late applications?

No; don't be silly. This year's deadline is the end of Sunday, December 3, 2023.

How do I apply?

Complete applications are submitted through a form on our website: https://web.sas.upenn.edu/mindcore/post-doctoral-research-fellowship/. Application documents should be saved with candidate's Lastname_Firstname.pdf in one PDF file in this order: cover letter, research statement, CV, referees (name, affiliation, email address). Pay attention to this because forms that are mis-ordered and named make admins crabby.

Will you notify us if we are not selected?

Of course; we are not monsters. That said, we don't send rejections until the very end of the process. If you have not heard anything at all from us by March 1: outlook is not so good.

Other questions not answered here? Email us at pennmindcore@sas.upenn.edu