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| SOP HR.09.00 | Postdoctoral Scholars |
| Owner/Contact Information: | College of Sciences, Human Resources, 919-515-3487 |
| Effective Date: | September 24, 2019 |
| Last Revised/Reviewed: | July 29, 2020 |
| Related Policies/Links: | International Employment (IE) Office of International Services (OIS) Office of Postdoctoral Affairs PI Responsibility for All Subordinate Activity Principal Investigator Eligibility and Standing REG 10.10.08 – Postdoctoral Scholars Resources for International Postdocs RUL 10.15.01 – Training in Responsible Conduct of Research |

1. Purpose/Introduction

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) document is intended to guide employees through general and operational processes pertaining to Postdoctoral Scholars. Postdoctoral Scholar processes are managed by each department, however, College of Sciences Human Resources (COS-HR) is available to answer questions or provide guidance regarding Postdoctoral Scholar processes and procedures.

Postdoctoral scholars (Postdocs) gain important training and research experience through their employment relationship with the University in ways that support and fulfill the research and scholarship missions of the institution. Postdocs receive training under the supervision of a tenured, tenure-track or other appropriate faculty member who serves as a mentor. Postdoctoral appointments are viewed as preparatory for full-time careers in research or scholarship, and the responsibilities associated with the appointment involve substantial research and/or scholarship. Postdoctoral appointments, though at-will, may not exceed five (5) years total.

2. Definitions

Academic Year Appointment: also known as 9 month appointments, begin August 16 and end May 15. 9-month academic-year appointments have no contractual work obligation for the summer.

At-Will Employment: An appointment may be designated as “employment at will” which means the appointment is subject to continuation or discontinuation at the discretion of the chancellor or the chancellor designee.

COS: College of Sciences

COS HR: Abbreviation for College of Sciences, Human Resources Office

Department Representative: The person submitting any action on behalf of their department or center

FTE: Full-time equivalent. Used to reference hours worked per week (i.e., 0.5 FTE=20 hours per week)

Fiscal Year Appointment: also known as 12-month appointments. Fiscal year appointments may begin at any time of the year but are usually for the period of July 1 through June 30.

FLSA: Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) regulations categorize employees as either “exempt” or “non-exempt” for purposes of being subject to timekeeping and overtime requirements.

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FLSA Exempt: Employees who are in an exempt position must meet a “duties test” showing that the primary purpose and functions meet requirements and expectations established for executive, administrative, professional, and computer roles. Employees who are exempt must be paid at the federally mandated salary threshold to be exempt from overtime.

FLSA Non-Exempt: Employees who are in a non-exempt position must record their work hours in WolfTime and are subject to timekeeping and overtime requirements.

OPA - Office of Postdoctoral Affairs at NC State University

PeopleAdmin (PA7) - The position management and applicant tracking system used by NC State University.

SOP: Standard Operating Procedures – The most used and agreed upon procedures for specific tasks, situations, or processes.

3. Procedures

3.1 Definition of Postdoctoral Scholars Classifications

3.1.1 Postdoctoral Titles - The term, “Postdoctoral scholar,” broadly refers to all Postdocs; however, there are classifications based on the responsibilities and/or the funding source of the Postdoc. Postdoctoral scholars must hold one of the approved titles.

- **Postdoctoral Research Scholar** – an individual who is engaged primarily in original research under the supervision of a faculty mentor.
- **Postdoctoral Teaching Scholar** – an individual who is engaged primarily in teaching under the supervision of a faculty mentor.
- **Postdoctoral Fellow** – an individual who receives a fellowship directly from a sponsoring agency and may not be compensated through the NC State payroll system and conducts research activities or academic scholarship under the supervision of a faculty mentor at NC State. Sponsoring agencies typically have their own guidelines and governance for participation in their programs. Postdoctoral fellows in unpaid appointments are not eligible for benefits. Postdoctoral fellows with external funding who are paid through the University’s payroll may only participate in the Postdoc Health Insurance program. All Postdoc Fellowship appointments need prior approval from the [Postdoc Program Manager](#) in the [Office of Postdoctoral Affairs](#) before hire actions can be completed. If approved, the [Postdoc Fellowship Appointment Form](#) should be completed and emailed to COS HR at cos_humanresources@ncsu.edu. COS HR will consult with the [Postdoc Program Manager](#) prior to the appointment start date and the appointment will be reviewed and entered into the HR system by the Postdoc Program Manager.

The NC State [Payroll](#) Tax Manager requires certain documentation to review and determine if a Postdoc fellow's pay is exempt from tax withholding. The Payroll Office makes the determination if an individual being paid through the Payroll System is a fellowship and not an employee. The bulleted items listed below is what payroll will need to make the determination:

- Source of funding
- Copy of the grant documentation that identifies what the individual will be doing

The Department Representative will need to consult with COS HR before sending any documentation to the University Payroll department. A COS HR Specialist will consult with Payroll on behalf of the department. Once payroll reviews the documentation and makes a determination, then the payroll tax manager will change the earnings code to Post Doc Fellowship in the HR system so the payment processed is not subject to taxes.

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3.1.2 Education Requirements - An applicant for a Postdoctoral Scholar position must have been awarded a PhD or equivalent doctorate in an appropriate field. In addition, the applicant must have been awarded a doctorate no more than five (5) years prior to the appointment. If the hiring official wishes to offer the Postdoctoral appointment to an applicant whose PhD was awarded more than five years prior to the appointment, the [Postdoc Program Manager](#) and the [Assistant Dean for Professional Development & External Relations](#) must approve the appointment.

3.2 By-laws

Departmental bylaws are the written instructions about the internal administration and procedures of how the college departments define or designate the responsibilities and functions of the faculty and of various committees. Department bylaws should be consistent in department governance as well as with general college and university policies and regulations, and should not conflict with any university policy, rule or regulation. Department Bylaws should be consulted on a departmental basis to see if they contain language specific to postdoc processes.

3.3 Recruitment Procedures

The [Office of Postdoctoral Affairs](#) (OPA) has suggested using [Guidelines for Postdoctoral Recruitment](#) to assist the department with the recruitment and selection of Postdoctoral appointments. Mentoring is viewed as a critical component of the Postdoctoral success, both as a Postdoctoral scholar and a future scientist. OPA requires Postdoctoral position descriptions to include a summary of the mentoring and [professional development](#) activities available to the Postdoc at NC State.

OPA has created a list of [Standard Interview Questions](#) that Principal Investigators (PI) or hiring officials may want to use when interviewing applicants for Postdoc appointments. Hiring officials are encouraged to interview either face-to-face, over the phone, or video conferencing prior to hiring a Postdoc.

Please reference the [COS PeopleAdmin Workflow Chart](#) to understand the PeopleAdmin system routing and approvals. The [Recruitment and Search Committee Best Practices Standard Operating Procedure](#) is designed to provide the College of Sciences with guiding procedures for recruitment of EHRA, SHRA, and Postdoc employee classifications. OPA related questions and concerns regarding Postdoc positions, recruitment, hiring, and changes in employment status, and salary related questions should be directed to the department representative who will consult with COS HR.

In an effort to increase diversity & inclusion in the Sciences recruitment and retention efforts, also review the [Guidelines for Recruiting a Diverse Workforce](#) throughout the recruitment process. Department Representatives should ensure to include the following diversity language within PeopleAdmin and within the offer letter:

- **Postings (PA7):** Inclusiveness and diversity are critical to the success of the College of Sciences and the University. The selected candidate will be expected to foster an environment that is supportive and welcoming of all groups.
- **Offer letter sentence:** You will be expected to foster an environment that is supportive and welcoming of all groups.

3.3.1 Internal and External Postings

Postdoctoral scholars may be identified by the hiring official before recruitment and job postings can be posted internally or externally.

Internal Posting - An internal job posting is posted internally so that candidates can be considered for the vacancy or the hiring official can select the candidate directly that best meets the requirements of the Postdoctoral appointment without going through a formal recruitment process. The posting is considered internal because a candidate has already been identified, not to be confused with a candidate internal to NC State. No waiver is needed. A link to the job posting is given to the

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Department Representative to give to the candidate/s who the hiring official has identified so that the candidate can formally submit their application for the position.

External Posting - An external job posting is posted on the NC State University job postings [webpage](#). These are job postings that are open to the public for application.

3.3.2 Postdoctoral Mentoring and Training

PeopleAdmin requests must include a mentoring/training statement in the "Primary Purpose of the Position" section. Sample statements are listed below:

Mentoring/Training Statement for a Research Postdoc:

The training and mentoring will be in:

- Building a successful research portfolio (publications)
- Building a national reputation (publishing scientific articles, organizing meetings, conferences, & workshops)
- Writing grant proposals
- Supervising graduate and undergraduate students
- Teaching and oral communication

Mentoring/Training Statement for a Teaching Postdoc:

- The university provides support for instructors in using Moodle for presentation of course materials. The position includes time for research and learning the scholarship of teaching.

Mentoring/Training Statement that is also sufficient for use:

- **Research:** "The Postdoc will meet frequently with Dr. XXX to discuss best practices in grant writing, manuscript preparation, and mentoring."
- **Teaching:** "The Postdoc will receive feedback and support regarding best practices in teaching by Dr. XXX (and the Department)."

3.3.3 Offer Letter - The department representative should use the [Offer Letter and Change Notification Memo SOP](#) and the [Offer Letter Process Map](#) to assist with the offer letter. The offer letter template can be found [here](#). Postdocs should not complete the "Terms and Conditions of Employment" form designed for standard EHRA employees. Postdoctoral benefits differ from those outlined in the "Terms and Conditions of Employment" form. The Postdoctoral offer letter addendum is included in the offer letter template.

3.3.4 Funding Contingency in Offer Letter - The Postdoc offer letter should include a statement outlining that the appointment is contingent upon the continued availability of non-state appropriated funding. The funding contingency should specifically state the name of the actual grant funding for the postdoctoral salary.

3.4 Salary Requirements for Postdoctoral Scholars

3.4.1 Minimum Salary: According to [5.1 of REG 10.10.08](#), the required minimum salary for a Postdoctoral scholar is the higher of the following:

- 60% of the starting salary range for an assistant professor in the appropriate discipline as published in the approved faculty salary ranges established by University Human Resources, **or**
- \$47,000. Also, the University recommends hiring all incoming Postdocs at 1.0 FTE.

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3.4.2 Salary Increases/Decreases: Salary increases and decreases for postdoctoral scholars are determined on a case-by-case basis and will be reviewed and either approved or denied by the [Office of Postdoctoral Affairs \(OPA\)](#). If the request is approved, OPA will send written approval via email to the COS HR email account of the approved salary increase or decrease.

The salary increase or decrease can then be initiated in the [PeopleAdmin](#) (PA7) system by the department representative. Once the action is fully endorsed in the PA7 system, a COS HR Specialist can then process the approved salary increase or decrease within job data of the PeopleSoft system, also known as the [HR system](#).

3.5 Onboarding Resources

University Onboarding: The [Onboarding Center](#) provides resources and new hire checklists for Postdoctoral Scholars.

Department Onboarding: Department onboarding should be conducted by the supervisor in conjunction with any departmental onboarding procedures with the department representative.

3.6 Professional Development

3.6.1 Learning and Organizational Development (L&OD) builds the knowledge, skills, and abilities of NC State's workforce by helping them develop and achieve their potential so that the organizations they work for can succeed and grow. L&OD fosters a learning culture where employees are engaged in continuous learning.

3.6.2 Required Research Trainings: Refer to the [Graduate School's Responsible Conduct in Research](#) for a comprehensive resource of training and awareness programming.

- [Sponsored Programs and Regulatory Compliance Services RCR Courses](#) - This website is a supplement to [Rule 10.15.1 Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research \(RCR\)](#). There are courses listed that have been authorized as compliant with the components of RCR education expected by the institution and federal regulations identified in the Rule.
- [How to Register for the CITI Program Online Responsible Conduct of Research \(RCR\) Courses](#)
- Sponsored Programs and Regulatory Compliance Services - Research Integrity <https://research.ncsu.edu/sparcs/compliance/integrity/>

3.7 Performance Management

All Postdoctoral appointments are subject to annual performance reviews that are documented and placed in the Postdoc's personnel file, [Section 4.1.4 of Regulation 10.10.8](#). Annual performance evaluations for Postdoctoral Scholars provides a defined cycle of review for managers to assess the employee's success toward meeting operational needs and professional development goals. Performance evaluations must take place at the end of each year (end of June/early July for fiscal year and end of May/early June for academic year).

Faculty mentors are expected to provide Postdocs with annual performance evaluations for all Postdocs who have been employed at NC State University for at least 90 days. Documents that can be utilized in the review process can be found in the [Faculty Resources section](#) of the [Office of Postdoctoral Affairs](#) website.

Postdocs are encouraged to complete an [Individual Development Plan \(IDP\)](#) at the beginning of their Postdoctoral appointment and use this document as a communication tool with their faculty mentors. This tool can also be used as a part of an annual performance review.

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3.8 Postdoctoral Health Insurance

Health insurance is offered to Postdoctoral scholars who are paid through the University payroll system. To be covered under this [benefit plan](#), Postdoctoral scholars must be on an active, paid assignment of at least .75 FTE (30 hour per week). Health insurance coverage begins on the first day of the month following the hire date. The department representative should include the [Postdoc/House Officers Medical Coverage Enrollment Form](#) in the [hiring packet](#) that is sent to COS HR.

3.9 Resources for International Postdocs

[The Graduate School](#) has compiled university and local resources to make their transition more manageable. Those resources can be found and outlined on The Graduate School [website](#).

The NC State [Office of International Services \(OIS\)](#) provides administrative, advising, and programming needs for the international students, staff and faculty at North Carolina State University. The OIS website offers a wealth of information for international Postdocs, such as guidance on what to do when you first arrive in the United States, housing and utilities, and how to obtain a driver's license and a Social Security number.

[International Employment \(IE\)](#) will assist departments to successfully employ and retain foreign national employees needing employment sponsorship on a temporary or permanent basis. More information can be found on the International Employment [website](#).

3.10 Resources for Postdoctoral Scholars

3.10.1 Benefits: NC State offers a comprehensive benefit package outlined on the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs [website](#).

3.10.2 Payroll: Postdoctoral Scholars are paid on a [monthly payroll schedule](#). Detailed payroll FAQs are outlined on the [University Controller's Office website](#).

3.10.3 System Access Request (SAR) Permissions: Access to the SAR web application is not available to all employees. Each unit has a management-designated SAR user who must meet the following requirements before being granted access to SAR:

3.10.4 Parking: Prior to Onboarding, employees that need to visit on campus can obtain a guest

3.10.5 Keys/Building Access: Postdoctoral Scholars should contact the Department Business Office to request keys, building, or electronic badge access. Badge access cannot be granted until after an [Onboarding appointment](#) is completed and a [Wolfpack One Card](#) is issued. The Wolfpack One Card is the official ID card for NC State.

3.10.6 Computers and supplies: Contact your department business office for computers and supplies.

3.10.7 Office / Lab Space: Contact the department business office regarding office or lab space needs (paint, equipment, renovation, etc). There may be furniture that could be sent to surplus or bought from [surplus](#).

3.10.8 OPA FAQ's: [Frequently Asked Questions" \(FAQs\)](#) are also available regarding the [Postdoctoral Scholars Regulation](#).

3.10.9 University assets and system access rights that are assigned to an employee for authorized business use that the employee will use should be documented on the [Asset and Systems Tracking Form](#).

3.10.10 [University Housing](#) is available to postdocs and their families with apartment-style accommodations.

3.10.11 [Resource Handbook for Postdocs and House Officers](#)

3.11 Frequently Asked Questions: Day to Day Operations

Q1: How do I get access to the Marketplace as a Shopper?

A1: A SAR (System Access Request) must be initiated and submitted by the department Business Officer.

Q2: I am planning to travel for work. What do I need to do?

A2: The employee must complete a [travel authorization](#) in MyPack Portal. The travel authorization routes to the department head and funding authorization points of contact within the department business office. The postdoc will be contacted if additional information is needed or when approved. No third party lodging is allowed.

Q3: Where is my personnel file and how can I view it?

A3: COS employee personnel files are stored in COS HR. To view your personnel file, an employee can complete the [Access to Personnel File Request Form](#).

Q4: How can I learn more about WolfTime/my leave?

A4: More information on WolfTime can be found on the WolfTime [webpage](#).

3.12 Employee Relations

[Employee Relations](#) is dedicated to providing consultative services based on a wide range of issues related to individual employment as well as organizational effectiveness and work environment issues. The [Assistant Dean for Talent Culture, and Human Resources](#) is the primary employee relations contact for the College of Sciences.

3.13 Separation

3.13.1 Voluntary Separation: To begin the separation/off-boarding process, the Department Representative should notify COS HR as soon as they are aware of an employee's separation. This notification should come in the form of a resignation letter/email or proof of last day worked via email to COS_HumanResources@ncsu.edu.

Supervisors should work with their Department Representative to assist them with the separation of an employee. The Department Representative should use the [Sciences Separation/Transfer Form](#) to complete required items and to see important reminders for separating employees.

3.13.2 Involuntary Separation: Department HR Partners and/or supervisors should contact the [Assistant Dean for Talent, Culture, and Human Resources](#), when considering an involuntary separation.

3.14 Exit Interviews

In addition to the NC State Postdoc & House Officer [Exit Survey](#), OPA would like to gather information regarding the Postdocs next career opportunity to better understand the career trajectory of the Postdoc. Postdoc employees should complete this exit interview [short survey](#). Any questions related to the exit interviews should be sent to OPA via email at Postdocadmin@ncsu.edu.

3.15 Extension of Postdoctoral Appointment Beyond Five (5) Years

There are times when a Postdoctoral appointment can be extended beyond five years. If a supervisor or PI needs for a Postdoc to work past five years, the following items must be sent to OPA for their review and approval:

- Reason for extending the Postdoc appointment past five years
- A mentoring/training plan regarding how the Postdoc training will be enhanced. The key components of the mentoring/training plan should include a statement of how the extra time working past five years will enhance the Postdoc's competitiveness for an academic, industry, or other career after the postdoc appointment has ended.

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The mentoring/training plan should include:

- How the mentor/supervisor will assist the Postdoc in preparing academic job applications (if the Postdoc desires to pursue that career path)
- How the mentor will continue to instruct the Postdoc in key skills needed to be a successful independent scientist (i.e. manuscript preparation, grant writing, oral presentations)
- How will the mentor will encourage the Postdoc to attend critical career and professional development opportunities at NC State or outside the university

4. Changes and Review

| Subsection | Summary of Changes | Date |
|---|--|------------------|
| 1 - Purpose/Introduction | Revised first paragraph to be consistent with other SOPs | October 31, 2019 |
| 3.11 - Frequently Asked Questions: Day to Day Operations | Underline and bolded questions and indented answers to questions | October 31, 2019 |
| 3.10 - Resources for Postdoctoral Scholars | Added link to the Resource Book for Postdocs | July 29, 2020 |
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