

Postdoctoral Training and Policies

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, Drexel University College of Medicine

Training Goals

Postdoctoral trainees play a vital role in advancing the University's mission to conduct cutting-edge research and advanced training. Postdoctoral fellows are considered as professional trainees irrespective of the source of support for their salary. The goal of the training is to prepare individuals to follow scientific careers that draw on expertise, knowledge and skills acquired through a tailored training and a record of accomplishments in the biomedical sciences in the College of Medicine. This document describes the obligations of the mentor for training postdoctoral fellows. In turn, postdocs must demonstrate high levels of productivity, initiative, and commitment to excellence in research and that they pursue other professional opportunities. To this end, the goals of the postdoctoral training are to:

- Provide advanced research training beyond the doctoral degree.
- Prepare individuals to follow scientific careers in academia, industry, government or other careers that require expertise in biomedical science.

Definition

A postdoctoral fellow is defined as follows:

- The postdoctoral fellow has earned a Ph.D., M.D. or equivalent terminal or doctoral degree.
- The appointment of the postdoctoral fellow is viewed as a training or transitional period preparatory to an academic, industrial, governmental, or other full-time research or teaching career.
- The postdoctoral fellow is of limited duration generally, not to exceed five years cumulatively. At that point the postdoctoral fellow must have a different type of appointment (e.g., Research Associate, Instructor etc.)
- The postdoctoral fellow is not part of a clinical training.
- The postdoctoral fellow trains under the supervision of a faculty member following the policies included in this document.

Postdoc Obligations

- Fulfill specific training objectives.
- Diligently carry out the research described in the appointment letter and subsequently in the discussions with the faculty sponsor and in the annual review forms.
- Conform with ethical research standards of the University.
- Comply with all relevant federal, state and municipal regulations and guidelines that relate to human subjects research, the care and use of laboratory animals, and the use of hazardous materials.

- Comply with all relevant University policies.
- Practice collegial conduct towards co-trainees, staff members and members of the research group.
- Record and document research results appropriately.
- Communicate regularly with the faculty sponsor.

Mentor Obligations

The postdoctoral experience is a unique “apprenticeship” between mentor and trainee. We embrace the concepts of mentorship that go beyond ensuring that quality research is performed and published. The mentor must also have a vested interest in the career development of the individual and must help them prepare them for the next step in their career. An outline of the responsibilities of the mentor include the following:

- Develop a mutually established and definable named project(s).
- Support presentation of the postdoc's work internally and externally with due recognition.
- Encourage regular attendance at seminars.
- Provide career guidance and set realistic career goals.
- Encourage attendance of career and professional development training.
- Meet regularly to discuss project/career progression.
- Provide a formal annual review of project/career progress.
- Apprise themselves of all University policies regarding postdoctoral appointments.
- Inform postdocs of all mandatory training sessions.

Postdoctoral fellows shall not be exploited, nor their scholarship training compromised working as technicians or for the financial gain of the mentor. The primary goal is the training of the postdoctoral fellow to pursue a scientific career, with mutually beneficial accomplishments to the mentor and fellow.

Mentors should also train and encourage postdocs to:

- Manage their own project, which should lead to first author and other publications.
- Learn chosen scientific discipline/field.
- Acquire technical skills.
- Encourage postdocs to seek secondary mentors who could provide them with opportunities in new areas of research and foster collaboration.
- Expand ancillary skills, e.g. writing, public speaking, networking, etc.
- Present scientific work both inside and outside the University.
- Write up research work for publication.
- Apply for extramural support, e.g. NRSA postdoctoral fellowships, career development awards, private foundation fellowships, etc.
- Participate in the peer-review of journal articles and other manuscripts.

Core Elements of Postdoctoral Training

Core Elements are focused on mandatory training sessions (e.g., Bioethics, and chemical hygiene training) and elements deemed “essential” to all postdoctoral training by NIH guidelines. Current NRSA guidelines stipulate that Responsible Conduct of Research training is mandatory for all postdoctoral trainees and the University also requires safety related training as follows:

- Responsible Conduct in Research Training
- Chemical Hygiene, Environmental Health and Radiation Safety Training (if relevant)
- Research Animal Policies, Practices, and Procedures Training
- Human Subject Research Training (if relevant)