

Your Rights as a UW Postdoc



The handout is developed collaboratively by Academic HR and Office of Postdoc Affairs. Updated in March 2018. For questions, please contact OPA at uwopa@uw.edu.

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA)

Along with key partners, the OPA supports over 1,100 postdocs at UW. The benefits and rights of being a postdoc vary based on your funding source and position. Although the basics are outlined below, it should be noted that they are subject to change. If you have any questions, always consult your department administrator.

Appointments: Postdoc positions are intended to be temporary positions to advance research careers. National guidelines recommend no more than 5 years in a postdoc position. Currently the majority of UW postdocs are in appointments intended for no more than 6 years after confirmation of terminal degree. Exceptions must be approved by Academic HR.

Appointment Termination: Termination of Research Associates should be notified at least 6 months in advance. Termination of Senior Fellows should be notified as soon as possible, with at least 60-days' notice required. Termination, or non-renewal of contract, can occur for documented performance reasons or documented loss of funding.

Grievances: The OPA and the Ombud can provide guidance on strategies to resolve conflicts informally. Research Associates may be eligible to pursue grievances through the faculty code process. Senior Fellows may be eligible to utilize their school-based grievance process.

Health Insurance: For all postdocs funded through the university, health insurance is the same as other Academic Personnel. Information can be found: <http://www.washington.edu/admin/hr/benefits/insure/fac-staff-lib/meddent/index.html>

Leave Benefits: Postdocs with appointments of Research Associates or Senior Fellows are eligible for 90 days of paid sick leave for an illness or injury during each academic year. **Paid sick leave** covers your own serious health conditions as defined by the FMLA, temporary disability due to pregnancy, childbirth, or recovery therefrom, and to take care for a family member with a serious health condition.

Professional Development: Given the dual nature of postdoc positions as employee and trainee, a reasonable amount of a postdocs' paid time may be used for career development activities, even when hired under a federal research grant.

Salary/Stipend: All postdocs' salaries/stipends are recommended to align with the NIH NRSA pay scale where possible. The NIH NRSA scale is adjusted yearly and has increased by 20.9% since August 2012, including increasing the minimum salary/stipend in December 2016, and accounts for years of experience.

Holidays: Postdocs are usually not required to work on the 10 university holidays. An alternative day off should be given if the postdoc is required to work.

Individual Development Plans (IDP) and Annual Evaluation:

OPA highly recommends every postdoc develop and implement an IDP, and the supervisor is encouraged to review and discuss IDP with the postdoc. Postdocs will also receive at least one written progress evaluation each year, and have the right to receive expectations that serve as the basis of these evaluation. Postdocs, along with other Academic Personnel, are eligible for annual merit raises based on this annual review.

Leave Without Pay (Partial Leave): In limited circumstances and for a limited period of time, a postdoc employee may be permitted to take a partial leave of absence without pay for reasons related to family obligations.

Non-Discrimination: As members of the UW community, postdocs are protected against, and may have remedies for, instances of discrimination and sexual harassment by addressing these situations through the University Complaint Investigation and Resolution Office (UCIRO) and/or the Title IX Office.

Time and Effort Commitment: Postdocs have a 12-month appointment, and are expected to work 11 months (eligible for one paid month off per year). Arrangements for time off are made beforehand with their supervisor. Postdocs work at least 40 hours per week. In keeping with professional standards, the OPA suggests that work schedules must be reasonable and related to research needs.

Health and Safety: Postdocs should have relevant health and safety training, and should refuse a hazardous assignment until it has been remedied or determined to be safe. UW Environmental Health & Safety can assist with necessary training or workplace needs for chemicals, substances and equipment. For other campus safety issues, UW SafeCampus is available 24/7.