

POSTDOCTORAL TRAINEE HANDBOOK



Contact Information

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs
The School of Graduate Studies

Lenore A. Kola
Dean

Rachel E. Begley
Postdoctoral Coordinator
Nord Hall 6th Floor
Phone: 216-368-0947
Fax: 216-368-4250
reb23@cwru.edu

Last updated: 08/12/03

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INTRODUCTION

Case Western Reserve University recognizes the importance of offering mentored postdoctoral training appointments to those who hold doctorate degrees from an accredited institution. The mentored postdoctoral training appointment is intended to enhance the ability of the postdoctoral trainee to acquire a regular position in their field of their choice.

As someone who is receiving a postdoctoral training experience at Case Western Reserve University, you are an important member of the University team, which includes staff, faculty, researchers and administrators who are dedicated to achieving excellence in teaching scholarship and research. Your mentored training experience will be a positive one as you take the time to become familiar with the University's policies and procedures listed in this handbook and realize your shared responsibility in the University's commitment to excellence.

Administration of Mentored Postdoctoral Training Program

Postdoctoral scholars and fellows, hereafter referred to as trainees, are governed by the Policies and Procedures contained in this Handbook and the Policies and Procedures of the School of Graduate Studies. In addition, post-doctoral scholars, as special class employees, are governed by the Postdoctoral Scholar Employment Handbook. This handbook shall not be construed as a contract or creating a contractual relationship between the University and mentored postdoctoral trainees.

Postdoctoral scholars are a special class of employees of the University eligible to participate in a special healthcare benefit plan, but not eligible to receive other University benefits including the retirement plan and Benelect. The postdoctoral scholar is engaged in research projects funded by grants obtained by others at the University or other departmental funds and receives a University salary. This salary is based upon stipend levels which are consistent with guidelines set by the sponsoring agency.

A second category, postdoctoral fellows, are not employees of the University and do not receive a University salary, but rather receive training while engaged in research projects funded by grants that they have personally applied for and obtained from either governmental or nongovernmental sources.

The postdoctoral fellow is also eligible to participate in a special healthcare benefit plan, but is not eligible for other University benefits.

Both the postdoctoral scholar and fellow will be guided by the policies and procedures of the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs as found in the Postdoctoral Trainee Handbook. However, the postdoctoral scholar, as an employee, will also be responsible to adhere to policies in the Postdoctoral Scholars Employment Handbook both of which are available in the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs.

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, located in the School of Graduate Studies, has been designated to ensure that the highest possible standards underlie the postdoctoral training experience at Case Western Reserve University. Specifically, this office is responsible for assisting in the development and implementation of all University policies applicable to all mentored postdoctoral trainees. The following are some of the services that are offered by the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs:

- Employment-related activities including letters of appointment, extensions, and termination of appointments for postdoctoral scholars
- Orientation
- Annual performance evaluations
- Training and education program development
- Surveying quality of training experience
- Coordination of all grievance procedures

Section I

Standards of Excellence

For the University to become the most powerful learning environment, every individual receiving mentored postdoctoral training must share responsibility for specific standards that promote excellence. These standards include such relevant issues as ethics, leadership, non-discrimination, and safety, as well as other topics that provide the foundation for a proactive training experience. Mentors and postdoctoral trainees share the responsibility for complying with and promoting these standards throughout the University community.

Professional Conduct

Professionalism in communications and behavior is the only acceptable form of interaction on campus and in University business settings. When differences of opinions occur, only constructive, legitimate, and respectful forms of communication are considered appropriate. All postdoctoral trainees are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is a positive reflection of the University. Failure to meet general accepted standards of professional conduct and personal integrity may be the basis for termination of the postdoctoral training experience.

Attendance

Punctuality and regular attendance are essential to insure optimal productivity and training. Trainees are expected to report to work on time every day for which they are scheduled and to maintain a satisfactory record of attendance. Trainees are encouraged to speak with their mentor to determine the attendance policy that applies to their department and/or school.

Dress Requirements

Postdoctoral trainees contribute to the University image. While they may express some degree of personal preference in dress and workplace décor, the University requires a professional appearance and workplace décor which complies with safety requirements and the University image. Any concerns regarding appropriate dress and workplace décor should be directed to the postdoctoral trainee's mentor.

Ethics

A shared code of ethics among all postdoctoral trainees strengthens the overall quality of the University community. The norm of expected conduct will be governed by truthfulness, openness to new ideas, and consideration for the individual rights of others, including the right to hold and express opinions different from one's own.

Conduct and Publication of Research Institutional Review Board (IRB)

The promotion of scholarship and the discovery of new knowledge through research are among the major functions of Case Western Reserve University. If this research is to be meaningful and beneficial to humanity, involvement of human subjects as experimental participants is necessary. It is imperative that investigators in all disciplines strive to protect human subjects. University policy and federal regulations demand compliance. Per federal regulations (45 CFR 46), all research involving human subjects requires submission of an IRB application prior to initiation of research to the Case Western Reserve IRB. Each IRB application must have a faculty member noted as the responsible Investigator. Applications that are not fully completed as instructed will not be accepted. See University Policy on the involvement of Human Participants in Research for guidelines under which investigations involving human subjects may be pursued.

Authorship

With academic jobs depending on a record of accomplishment, authorship issues are of vital importance to postdoctoral trainees. Order of authorship may be determined as much by social custom in the individual department as by recommended guidelines. It is recommended that mentored postdoctoral trainees initiate the discussion of authorship issues in the earliest stages of a project. Authorship issues should continue to be discussed throughout the development and completion of a project. It may also be helpful for mentored postdoctoral trainees and their mentors to memorialize these discussions in writing.

Responsibilities and Criteria for Authorship

- Only those who have contributed substantially to the generation or analysis of data reported in the publication, or to the theory and interpretation of data leading to its conclusions, should be included as authors.
- All authors must have contributed to developing the manuscript and have read and understood the entire contents of the publication.

- All authors must be sufficiently familiar with the conduct and at least the general interpretation of the research to accept responsibility for its integrity and credibility.
- It is the responsibility of the author corresponding with the journal or conference to see that all authors approve the final form before publication.
- All investigators accepting authorship must also accept the responsibility of avoiding unnecessary duplicate journal publication of similar material. Previous publication should be cited in any repeated use of data or theory, and a new publication should meet the criterion of making a new intellectual contribution to the field.
- Contributions such as provision of standard materials, performance of incidental assays or measurements, use of facilities, routine patient care, critical review of the manuscript, or providing only an environment or financial support for the research, do not justify authorship unless the above criteria have also been met, but can be recognized by acknowledgment.
- For large group projects it is important at the outset that all members of the research team understand and agree to these principles of authorship. It is also important that procedures for resolving more detailed concerns, such as the timing of presentations or publications, order of authorship, and privilege of presenting results at meetings, be determined to the extent feasible, at the beginning of the work.
- Disputes or questions concerning authorship should be brought for resolution to the department chair, division head, or similar first line of academic management. If these cannot be resolved at that level, they should be brought to the attention of the Vice President for Research and Technology Transfer who will resolve them in consultation with the Faculty Dean and/or the Faculty Senate Committee on Research. However, if these matters involve allegations or evidence of scientific misconduct, they must immediately be brought to the attention of the Vice President for Research and Technology Transfer.

Research Ethics

Recognizing the vital importance of research activities in the educational process and the requirement for the highest standards of ethical conduct in the performance and reporting of such research, the University has established guidelines for the investigation of alleged research misconduct and disciplinary action. Allegations of postdoctoral trainee research misconduct will be subject to investigation by the University in accordance with procedures established by the Office of Research Administration.

Postdoctoral trainees who have concerns about the integrity of any research or its reporting should seek to resolve those concerns fairly and honestly, without fear of academic or professional reprisal. Postdoctoral trainees at any time may discuss or report any observed, suspected or apparent misconduct in research with the University's Research Integrity Officer in the Office of Research Administration. Postdoctoral trainees may also discuss such matters directly with the person or persons involved, with their mentors, department chairpersons, the dean of the school, and/or with the dean of the School of Graduate Studies. For more information about what constitutes research misconduct, see http://www.cwru.edu/research/ORA_Misconduct.html.

Conflict of Interest

All postdoctoral trainees, while acting for or on behalf of the University, should demonstrate both loyalty to the University and the highest standards of ethics. They should ensure that outside activities do not conflict with or reflect adversely on the University's interest nor deprive the University of legitimate training time. Postdoctoral trainees need to disclose actual or potential conflicts to their mentors as soon as they become aware of them.

Computing Ethics

Computing resources are available for efficient processing of legitimate University business and communications. Access to and usage of computing technology places a responsibility on each authorized postdoctoral trainee to conduct computing business in the same ethical manner that is required of all other conducts with added concerns for issues including:

1. Legal use of licensed software
2. Protection of confidential information
3. Legitimate use of hardware/ software/periphery devices

4. Legitimate access to and use of valid data
5. Asset management
6. Right to privacy
7. Respect for and safeguarding of security passwords, user identity, and system access
8. Appropriate use of e-mail as an efficient communication tool, and
9. Legal and appropriate use of the internet.

Safety and Security

The University expects that all postdoctoral trainees will share the responsibility for safety and security of themselves, fellow trainees and employees, students and guests, and maintain reasonable care when using University property. Postdoctoral trainees must comply with University written policies and guidelines set forth by offices including but not limited to Occupational and Environmental Safety and Protective Services. The University requires compliance with civil and criminal law and Federal, State, and Local regulations. All postdoctoral trainees are expected to comply with safety practices relating to their work and University guidelines. Postdoctoral trainees can contribute to the safety of all by:

- Encouraging safety and security practices among peers
- Adhering to laboratory and departmental safety procedures
- Reporting violations of safe practices to the Department of Occupational and Environmental Safety
- Reporting on-the-job accidents in a timely manner in accordance with OSHA and State Department of Health guidelines to the University's Workers' Compensation office
- Reporting crimes and suspicious situations to Protective Services
- Seeking diagnosis and possible treatment from the University Health Service in the event of personal injury from an on-campus accident
- Cooperating with University officials when requested to do so
- Taking note of potentially violent situations and reporting them immediately to the appropriate University personnel

Alcohol and Drug-Free Training Environment

The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of alcohol or controlled substances, including illicit drugs, is prohibited on property owned or operated by Case Western Reserve University and is grounds for disciplinary action. No postdoctoral trainee may report to or engage in University related work while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol. Postdoctoral trainees who are convicted of a violation of a criminal drug statute as a result of an incident occurring in the workplace or while on University property must notify the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs in writing within five days of his or her conviction. Such conviction will be grounds for mandatory evaluation and possible disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Postdoctoral trainees who have the need for assistance in avoiding the use of alcohol or controlled substances, should contact the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs directly.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is unacceptable conduct which will not be tolerated. All members of the University share responsibility for avoiding, discouraging, or reporting any form of sexual harassment. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which regulates these statutes, defines sexual harassment as any unwelcome sexual advance, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, or verbal or physical conduct directed at an individual or individuals because of gender and motivated by animus (strong dislike or animosity) based on gender when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's training;
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for decisions affecting that individual's continuance in the research program; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's training performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive training environment.

Any postdoctoral trainee who believes that sexual harassment is occurring has the right to an inquiry and should request a copy of the policy and procedures for Sexual Harassment from their mentor, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, Human Resources or the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Case Western Reserve University admits postdoctoral trainees of any race, religion, age, color, disability, sexual orientation, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the university. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religion, age, sex, color, disability, sexual orientation, or national or ethnic origin in administration of its policies or to any University-administered programs.

The Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity coordinates compliance with Title III (age), Title VI (race), Title IX (sex), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (disability) and the Americans With Disabilities Act (disability) for the University. A postdoctoral trainee with a complaint about discrimination on the basis of race, sex, age or disability may contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity.

Requests for accommodations for disabilities should be directed to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity.

Smoke-Free Training Environment

The University is committed to health-related research, teaching, and protecting the health environment of the University community. Therefore, the University does not permit smoking in its facilities, in or around main entrances or exits of its facilities, or in University vehicles (excluding residence hall rooms). If a postdoctoral trainee needs assistance with a smoking cessation program, he/she may contact the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs.

Vaccination

In compliance with U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Regulations, all postdoctoral trainees using or potentially exposed to human blood borne pathogens must receive hepatitis B vaccination or sign a declination statement prior to using or being exposed to blood borne pathogens. This vaccination is available through University Health Services at no charge to the postdoctoral scholar. Other vaccinations may be required in the event that the selected candidate may travel during employment to areas in which vaccination is recommended by the federal government.

Section II

Postdoctoral Training and Development

The University will endeavor to provide a training environment for each postdoctoral trainee which provides the opportunity to advance the postdoctoral trainee's scientific abilities and professional career development.

Individual Development Plans (IDP)

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) should be developed by each postdoctoral trainee in collaboration with his/her mentor. The IDP represents a planning process that identifies both professional development needs and career objectives. It also serves as a communication tool between individuals and their mentors. A suggested format for the IDP is available in the School of Graduate and Professional Studies.

Performance Evaluation

Postdoctoral trainees and their mentors will be evaluated annually. Dates of evaluation should correspond to those used by the mentor's administrative center (e.g., School of Medicine, School of Engineering, etc).

Evaluation of Mentors

Each postdoctoral trainee will evaluate their mentor. This evaluation will be included with the information submitted by the mentor to his/her department chair for their annual evaluation. Points of evaluation should include but are not restricted to the following:

1. Accessibility
2. Communication with Postdoctoral Trainee
3. Training atmosphere
4. Willingness to allow pursuit of related but independent research
5. Willingness to allow outside training opportunities for career advancement

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs will make evaluation forms available for use by postdoctoral trainees and mentors. Both the IDPs and the evaluations should be submitted to the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs in the School of Graduate Studies.

Evaluation of Postdoctoral Trainees

Each mentor will evaluate their postdoctoral trainee(s) using the IDP. In addition, points of evaluation should include but are not restricted to the following:

1. Research performance
2. Professional presentations, oral and written
3. Grants applied for and/or awarded
4. Teaching performance (if applicable)
5. Communication skills with Mentor and collaborators
6. Relationship with other members of the laboratory
7. Goals for the following year

Responsibilities and Obligations of Postdoctoral Trainees

Postdoctoral trainees have certain obligations to their mentor, the laboratory in which they work, the Department with which they are associated, the grantor whose funds support them, and CWRU. These obligations include, but are not limited to:

- Complete conformity with ethical standards in research and scholarship
- Compliance with good laboratory, research and scholarship practice, including the maintenance of adequate research records and due observation of the University's standards regarding the use of isotopes, chemicals, infectious agents, and animal and human subjects
- Recognition that all materials, reagents, records, and data are the property and ultimate responsibility of the mentor and cannot be removed or disclosed without the mentor's permission
- Publishing and formally presenting the results of their research or scholarship during the appointment period
- Contribute to the mentoring of undergraduate and graduate students in their laboratories, departments and the larger educational community at CWRU
- Actively seeking independent support in order to transition into the Postdoctoral Fellow position – if the mentored trainee is a postdoctoral scholar
- Compliance with all applicable CWRU policies

The supervising mentor, the associated department, and CWRU have obligations to the postdoctoral trainees. By appointing a postdoctoral trainee, mentors, departments and CWRU take responsibility for providing a training environment which offers the postdoctoral trainee the opportunity to become independent, and to advance the postdoctoral trainee's scientific abilities and qualifications for a professional career.

Training Enhancements

Postdoctoral trainees are encouraged to discuss with their mentors the feasibility of their participation in the following activities:

- Attending and presenting at seminars and symposia
- Attending and presenting annually at national meetings
- Participating in coursework and other educational venues
- Obtaining independent support for postdoctoral trainee positions through grant applications (if the postdoctoral trainee is a postdoctoral scholar)
- Pursuing training opportunities outside of the appointment

Unsatisfactory Performance and Corrective Action

In the event of unsatisfactory performance, postdoctoral trainees will have reasonable opportunity to improve their performance after being notified that their performance is not meeting the standards that have been established by the mentor and the School of Graduate Studies and Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. Corrective action is intended to provide the postdoctoral trainee an objective and consistent process for professional development while offering the mentor an unbiased and expeditious method for communicating expectations and performance standards.

Corrective action may be initiated by a mentor to address poor performance, violation of professional conduct, or behaviors that are unproductive or detrimental to the postdoctoral training experience or University. Mentors must consult with the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs or Employee Relations on the appropriate action steps to be taken. The corrective action process may include verbal and/or written warning(s) or written warning with probation not exceeding 30 calendar days depending on the severity of the performance issue.

If a postdoctoral trainee fails to improve his/her performance or correct the behavior at issue on or before the expiration of the probation period, the mentor, in conjunction with the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs or Employee Relations in Human Resources, may take further action up to and including termination of employment. Immediate termination may occur in the event a postdoctoral trainee has committed an act which violates civil or criminal law or an act which threatens the health or safety of others.

Internal Employment Opportunities

Postdoctoral trainees who wish to pursue posted employment opportunities at the University are responsible for satisfying the following qualifications:

- Responding to the appropriate job posting by providing the required documentation in a timely manner
- Maintaining a performance level of satisfactory or better
- Fulfilling the length of the appointment term as stated in the letter of appointment
- Notifying current mentor of interest in the posted employment opportunity

If the postdoctoral trainee is selected for a posted employment opportunity in Human Resources, the transfer may occur upon agreement of the releasing department/mentor or fulfillment of the appointment term as stated in the appointment letter.

While the job posting system offers tremendous opportunity, postdoctoral trainees must be aware they will be required to fulfill all of the requirements of an applicant when applying for same.

A postdoctoral trainee who successfully obtains employment after applying for a posted position in Human Resources should take note of the job level, compensation, overtime eligibility, and benefits eligibility associated with the position.

The terms of employment associated with the position will become effective upon the date the position begins.

Section III

Postdoctoral Trainee Services

Deterrents to Workplace Violence

The University strives to provide an environment that is safe, secure, and free from violence or any related disruptive conduct. Postdoctoral trainees can contribute to the safety of all by:

- Immediately reporting any acts of violence they experience, observe, or become aware of to the Department of Protective Service or to Human Resources
- Immediately reporting potentially violent behavior of co-workers to their hiring mentor or the Department of Protective Services
- Immediately reporting the possession of a weapon including but not limited to firearms, ammunition or any other instruments, devices or substances designed, intended or used to inflict harm upon persons or property, to the Office of Protective Services
- Utilizing the services and programs that are available from Protective Services such as self-defense education and escort service

Grievance Procedure

There are two situations for which a postdoctoral trainee may file a formal grievance complaint with the University:

1. Perceived unfair administration of a stated postdoctoral trainee policy.
2. Termination review for involuntary termination.

The postdoctoral trainee is responsible for filing the grievance in a timely manner and requesting review by the Dean of School of Graduate Studies. Any postdoctoral trainee or former postdoctoral trainee who is considering a grievance should consult with the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs on the procedure for filing a formal grievance.

A three-step procedure has been established for Postdoctoral Trainees to present complaints about administrative actions they feel are unfair:

1. Postdoctoral Trainees with grievances should first discuss them with the person or persons against whom the complaint is directed.

2. In those instances in which this discussion does not resolve a grievance to the postdoctoral trainee's satisfaction, a complaint should be presented in writing to the department chairperson. The Chairperson will review the grievance with the postdoctoral trainee and will attempt to resolve the issue on the basis of all available information.
3. In the event that the Postdoctoral Trainee is not satisfied with the Chairperson's resolution of the grievance, the postdoctoral trainee may bring the matter to the attention of the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Dean will ask the postdoctoral trainee to put the grievance in writing. The Dean will then discuss the case with the postdoctoral trainee, the person against whom the grievance is directed, and the department chairperson. At the Dean's discretion, others may also be consulted.

The Dean will make a determination and that determination will be final.

At the Dean's discretion, a Grievance and Termination Review Committee may be appointed to review the grievance on the Dean's behalf. This Committee will be made up of at least one member of the faculty and one member of the Postdoctoral Research Association. The procedures for the committee will be determined by the Committee itself as the circumstances warrant, but generally the postdoctoral trainee, the person(s) against whom the accusation is raised, the department chair, and/or others may be asked to provide the Committee with information. Upon review of the grievance, the Committee will make recommendations to the Dean of Graduate Studies. The postdoctoral trainee may request the participation of members of the University community familiar with his or her circumstances, but the participation of any individual in the Committee's proceedings will be at the Committee's discretion.

After the Committee has made its recommendations to the Dean, a determination will be made by the Dean. The Dean's determination is final. It should be understood that this grievance procedure relates solely to complaints concerning administrative issues as spelled out above.

Identification Cards

All postdoctoral trainees will have identification cards to carry with them and which they must be able to produce upon request.

Key Control

Postdoctoral trainees who are issued keys are expected to keep them in a secure area. Keys may not be copied, loaned, or otherwise misused by postdoctoral trainees entrusted with possession. Keys must be returned to the Access Services Department on or before the last day the postdoctoral trainee is with the University.

Trainee References

The University will handle reference requests of former postdoctoral trainees by providing the following information: type and length of postdoctoral training experience. A former postdoctoral trainee may sign a written release authorizing the requestor to obtain additional information.

Verification of Training Experience and Wage Verifications

Present and former postdoctoral trainees often need verification of their postdoctoral training experience to obtain credit, financing, and other services. The University cooperates with all requests, but at the same time will attempt to protect the privacy of the postdoctoral trainees' records.

Postdoctoral trainees are to direct verification calls to the Compensation and Records Office of the Human Resources Department or the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. For oral requests the information released will be limited to type and length of postdoctoral training experience. If the postdoctoral trainee signs a written release authorizing additional information to be included in the verification, the Compensation and Records Office or the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs will provide financial information to the extent permitted by the release. No forecast of future postdoctoral training experience or performance-related information will be provided in response to an oral or written request.

The University will cooperate with requests for information to the extent required by law as -in the case of a valid subpoena.