

GUIDELINES FOR POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLAR TERM LIMITS, EVALUATIONS AND GRIEVANCES

A. INTRODUCTION

The University of Colorado Boulder's postdoctoral scholar community is comprised of postdoctoral associates, postdoctoral fellows and postdoctoral research associates, and are commonly referred to as postdocs. Postdocs constitute one of the cornerstones of the research enterprise at the University of Colorado Boulder. Due to their high level of academic achievement and expertise, postdocs are able to work in a semi-independent manner on one or more research projects under the direction of the principal investigator with whom they are training.

DEFINITIONS AND JOB CODES OF POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLARS

Postdoctoral Associate (1312)

Postdoctoral Associate appointments are restricted to individuals who are paid through internal funds, including federal grant dollars, on a salaried basis and are in a direct reporting relationship with the University of Colorado Boulder; this title is for University of Colorado Boulder use only. Appointments paid on a stipend basis use the Postdoctoral Fellow job code. This title is granted to persons holding a doctoral degree (or equivalent) and who will be engaged in a defined period of full-time mentored research and/or scholarship and field-appropriate professional activities in preparation for transition into an independent career. Secondary responsibilities such as lab management and instruction may be pursued as part of professional development; however, such activities are not the primary responsibilities of a postdoctoral associate.

Postdoctoral Fellow (1438)

Postdoctoral Fellowship appointments are restricted to individuals who receive fellowship awards directly from the funding agency and are considered employees of the University of Colorado. Individuals appointed as Postdoctoral Fellows are typically paid salary and are eligible for state sick leave plans and eligible for medical and dental benefits if they are 50% FTE or above. This title is granted to persons holding a doctoral degree (or equivalent) and who will be engaged in a defined period of full-time mentored research and/or scholarship and field-appropriate professional activities in preparation for transition into an independent career. Secondary responsibilities such as lab management and instruction may be pursued as part of professional development; however, such activities are not the primary responsibilities of a postdoctoral fellow.

Research Associate (1306)

Research Associate appointments should not be used for temporary postdoc positions, and

are restricted to individuals holding a doctoral degree (or equivalent) and who will be engaged in research and/or scholarship. While some units appoint postdocs into Research Associate positions (i.e., Postdoctoral Research Associate), "Research Associate" should only be used for more senior, permanent roles rather than postdoc positions.

Research Associates are considered regular research faculty, paid on a salaried basis and may engage in activities beyond their primary responsibility of research and/or scholarship that are appropriate for senior research faculty including grant writing, lab management, supervision, etc. Research Associates may or may not have previously held a postdoctoral appointment, and may perform their duties with a degree of independence.

B. TERM LIMITS FOR POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLAR APPOINTMENTS

- A postdoc should have a maximum of five total years of postdoctoral experience at the University. Time spent as a postdoc at other institutions is not included in the five-year term limit. This maximum term does not include periods of unpaid leave.
- Postdoctoral Associates and postdocs who are classified as Research Associates (or Postdoctoral Research Associates) are subject to the five-year term limit. Postdoctoral Fellows' terms are governed by the conditions of their fellowship, and therefore, not subject to the university's five-year term limit.
- While experience as a postdoc at the University before November 1, 2021 or at a previous institution is not covered in the five-year timeframe, units are strongly encouraged to retroactively consider this postdoc experience. While not a requirement until the five-year mark is reached, the University recommends the postdoc's years of experience to be factored in and encourages units to transition them after five years of postdoc experience, whether at the University or elsewhere.
- Individuals who are retained at the University beyond the five-year term limit should be placed into a regular job classification, such as Instructor, Research Associate, or Assistant Professor.

C. EXTENSIONS FOR TERM LIMITS

- One-year extensions may be granted in extraordinary circumstances. A postdoc and their faculty mentor may petition the dean of the college/school/institute in which the postdoc is rostered for a possible extension to these terms. To request a one-year extension, a postdoc and their mentor must submit a jointly signed letter/request to the dean explaining 1) why a more permanent job classification such as Instructor, Research Associate, or Assistant Professor is not being offered; 2) how the additional time will support the postdoc's career progression; and 3) the career transition plan after the one-year extension.
- Extensions are at the discretion of the dean of the college/school/institute in which the postdoc is rostered.

D. EVALUATION AND GRIEVANCE PROCESSES

- Per the [Research Faculty Merit Process](#), the postdoc should receive an annual evaluation. This process can be completed according to the procedures adopted by the college/school/institute into which the postdoc is hired. The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs has [resources](#) and [templates](#) to assist both postdocs and faculty mentors with

annual evaluations.

- The [Faculty Relations](#) division of the Office of Faculty Affairs is a resource when grievances arise for postdocs and/or their faculty mentors, including the [Professional Rights and Responsibilities of Faculty Members](#).
- Each college/school/institute should establish their own procedures for handling grievances involving professionalism issues, salary, benefits and work conditions. Clear directions for how to appeal decisions will be developed by the college/school/institute. The final decision rests with the dean of the college/school/institute in which the postdoc is employed.

Should there be any questions, contact the HR Research Faculty Team at resfachr@colorado.edu or Office of Postdoctoral Affairs at opa@colorado.edu.