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Postdoctoral Fellows Policy

Office of Administrative Responsibility:	Postdoctoral Affairs Office
Office of Accountability:	Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) Office of the Vice-President (Research)
Approving Authority:	The Governors of the University of Alberta

Purpose

Postdoctoral Fellows (PDFs) are valued members of the university community and make an indispensable contribution to its research environment. PDFs are appointed as part of the academic activities of the University of Alberta.

The purpose of this policy document is to state the university's position on Postdoctoral Fellows.

Definitions

The attached definitions table outlines the terms used in this policy document and any specific rules of interpretation that apply.

Scope

Compliance with this policy document extends to all members of the university community.

Policy Statement

1. The University of Alberta considers PDFs trainees rather than employees. As such,

    a. initial appointments must occur within five years from the completion of a doctoral degree or 10 years from the completion of a MD, DDS or equivalent. These time limits may only be extended by the Vice-President (Research) or designate, due to circumstances requiring an interruption in the PDF's research career.

b. appointments are for a limited period of time, from a minimum of three months to a maximum of five years. This time limit may only be extended by the Vice-President (Research) or designate due to circumstances requiring an interruption in the PDF's research career. For those not holding permanent resident status, extension of the appointment will be subject to immigration approval.

c. PDFs train under the general supervision of a Faculty Member(s), as a member of a research group or as an individual researcher, and may assist with the supervision of graduate students.

d. PDFs may apply in open competition for a faculty position.

e. with the prior agreement of the supervising Faculty Member(s), PDFs may undertake teaching responsibilities up to a maximum of one full course per term.

f. PDFs may be issued time-limited work permits for positions offering a stipend or salary. They are exempt from advance approval from Service Canada under confirmation exemption code C44 of the Citizenship and Immigration Canada's FW1 Foreign Worker Manual.

2. Individual Faculty Members or a group of faculty in consultation with the Unit Head may invite a PDF to join them as a trainee in a collegial relationship. The Faculty Member(s)

a. is responsible for sending out the appointment letter to the PDF, which stipulates the terms and conditions of the appointment.

b. is responsible for the determination of the nature and scope of the scholastic and research activities and for supervision and feedback with respect to those activities.

c. and the department Unit Head are responsible for ensuring that there is sufficient office and/or laboratory space for PDFs.

d. will provide an environment wherein other applicable skills and/or knowledge may be acquired by the PDF (e.g. career planning, teaching experience, team/collaborative research, and specific career skills, which may include writing grant applications, critiquing papers and proposals, managing a laboratory, mentoring students, communication with non-specialists, and multi-disciplinary research).

e. is responsible, with the PDF, for developing at the start of the appointment period a clear understanding of rights and obligations under the policies and procedures on research, patents, conflict of interest, fraud and any other relevant issues.

f. will ensure that PDFs are appropriately recognized for their contributions in research outcomes, including publications, patents, teaching and service to the university.

g. will provide whatever resources are required to support the collaborative research activities.

h. shall ensure that all PDFs and their eligible dependents are enrolled in the University Postdoc Supplemental Health Insurance Plan, unless their spouse/partner has comparable coverage.

3. All PDFs, both on and off campus, must be registered and administered through the Postdoctoral Affairs Office, regardless of whether the funding comes directly from the Funding Agency or through the university.

4. PDFs must

    a. comply with all university and applicable funding agency policies and procedures.

    b. comply with the provincial and federal legislation and any Professional Codes of Ethics governing the practice of their discipline.

    c. be responsible as a precondition to contact a Canadian embassy, consulate or visa office abroad to arrange an appropriate work permit and, if required, a temporary resident visa and/or medical examination if they are neither Canadian citizens nor permanent residents.

5. Disputes involving PDFs and another member of the university community shall be resolved in accordance with the *Postdoctoral Fellows Dispute Resolutions Procedure*.

6. A formal complaint against a PDF shall be handled according to the *Postdoctoral Fellows Discipline Procedure*. Nothing shall prevent the university from referring an individual matter to the appropriate law enforcement agency or professional body should such action be considered necessary.

7. PDFs may receive a Certificate of Postdoctoral Study (Training) recognizing completion of their appointment. The certificate is not an academic credential.

Definitions Table

Any definitions listed here apply to this policy document only with no implied or intended institution-wide use. For clarity, defined terms listed here include grammatical variations thereof.	
Discipline	Administrative consequences for dealing with a formal complaint brought against a PDF who has violated university policies or procedures.
Dispute	A serious disagreement between a PDF and another member of the university community regarding matters other than the violation of university policy and procedures.
Faculty Member	University faculty member who has been designated to oversee the activities associated with the scholastic opportunity of the PDF.

Funding Agency	Either the university or another institution or agency that provides the funding to the PDF.
Postdoctoral Affairs Office	The office that has been designated to register the PDFs at the university and to provide formal administrative services.
Postdoctoral Fellows (PDFs)	Individuals who are appointed as research trainees normally within five years from the completion of a doctoral degree or 10 years from the completion of a MD, DDS or equivalent.
Professional Codes of Ethics	All provincial and federal Codes of Ethics or Codes of Conduct governing the relevant profession and the practice of its discipline.
Unit Head	Applies to Chair of a Department, Dean of a non-departmentalized faculty, Director of an Institute.

Parent Policy Suite

- Postdoctoral Fellows Policy
- Postdoctoral Fellows Appointment Procedure
- Postdoctoral Fellows Discipline Procedure
- Postdoctoral Fellows Dispute Resolution Procedure

Related Policy Documents

- Conflict of Interest and Commitment and Institutional Conflict Policy
- Fraud and Irregularity Policy
- Patent Policy
- Research Policy

Related Links

- Postdoctoral Affairs Office

History

- May 12, 2006 Approved.
- June 21, 2013 Approved.
- November 25, 2025 Editorial amendment. Formatting and links.

For questions surrounding policy document interpretation or implementation, please contact the Office of Administrative Responsibility.

The official version of this document may be obtained from https://www.ualberta.ca/policies-procedures/index.html