

# Standard Practice Guide Policies

## Postdoctoral Research Fellows

201.19

**Applies to:** Research Fellows and Senior Research Fellows

### I. Policy

Since postdoctoral research training is a valuable educational path for scholars in certain academic fields, the University provides opportunities for individuals to be appointed as Research Fellows or Senior Research Fellows while receiving such training. Each Fellow's hiring unit should assign a tenured or tenure track instructional or research faculty member to provide mentorship to him or her.

### II. Regulations and Definitions

#### A. Titles and Term of Appointments

1. Units at the University will use the title of Research Fellow when appointing individuals who already possess either a terminal doctoral degree (i.e. Ph.D.) or a professional doctorate (e.g., M.D., D.D.S, D.V.M.) and who are pursuing advanced scientific or scholarly training, which may be in a clinical setting but is outside of the traditional clinical service and does not involve direct patient care.
2. Units may appoint Fellows as either Research Fellow or Senior Research Fellow, as appropriate to the circumstances. Research fellowships should be for one year or less, with the possibility of renewal in subsequent years, not to exceed a total of five years of postdoctoral training.
3. Before extending an appointment offer, the hiring unit must first identify resources to support the appointment for the entire length of the appointment. If circumstances arise that require the hiring unit to terminate a Research Fellow appointment before the specified appointment end date, before notifying the Fellow the hiring unit should first consult with the appropriate Dean or Director and the Office of Academic Human Resources.

4. Research Fellows are appointed for the purpose of providing them with advanced training as described above in section II.A.1. At the outset of the appointment, the faculty member who has been assigned as a mentor to the Fellow should communicate the hiring unit's standards regarding the responsibilities of the individual Research Fellows and the unit's expectations for how they should progress through their training. Like all members of the University community, it is the responsibility of each Research Fellow to perform all related activities to the best of his or her ability, in a collegial manner and with the highest standards of integrity.
5. Typically and under the appointment terms, Research Fellows will receive a salary, regardless of fund source, for the services the unit expects them to perform. The most common arrangement is for the individual's training to be accomplished through the performance of obligations on a sponsored grant or contract.
6. Research Fellows who are paid via a fellowship, regardless of fund source, under which no service to the University is required, are considered "scholar trainees." Units appointing "scholar trainees" may charge the cost of their fellowships to training grants, fellowships or various other University funds designated for such purposes. Appointments of such individuals will be at "0%" effort.
7. Hiring units will use the title of House Officer for persons with professional doctorates whose training will involve patient care responsibilities, in a manner consistent with provisions of the contract between the University and the House Officers Association.
8. Research Fellows whose program of activities will involve classroom teaching as an "officer of instruction" must hold a separate appointment for this responsibility in a manner consistent with provisions of the contract between the University and the Lecturers' Employee Organization.

## B. Support of Research Fellows

Hiring units may pay fellowships and/or salaries and associated benefit costs with the type of funds described below:

1. Externally funded training grants or fellowships, which may be administered through the University or paid directly by the granting agency to the Fellow.
2. Sponsored research projects, when such training is consistent with the terms of the grant or contract.
3. University general funds or other funds.

## C. Approval of Research Fellows

1. Before a mentor makes any type of commitment to hire a Research Fellow, the appointment must be approved by the Chairperson or the Dean/ Director of the teaching or research unit in which the appointment is to be made. Before approving a Research Fellow appointment, the Dean or Director will assure that the hiring unit has met the terms described below:
2. The hiring unit has identified or will be able to identify appropriate fund sources to cover the cost of the Fellow's fellowship and/or salary and the required University contributions to fringe benefits associated with the fellowship.
3. The hiring unit is able to make space available for the Fellow's use.
4. The mentor and the Fellow have agreed upon a proposed training program that will enhance the Fellow's scholarship and ability as a researcher.
5. The hiring unit has a conflict resolution process available to the Fellow to raise concerns or problems connected with the fellowship. Unit policies are described at: [Dispute Resolution for Postdoctoral Research Fellows](http://hr.umich.edu/acadhr/researchfellows/dispute.html) (<http://hr.umich.edu/acadhr/researchfellows/dispute.html>)

#### D. Terms and Benefits of Research Fellow Appointments

All Research Fellows will:

1. Be required to enroll themselves and their dependents, as necessary, in the University group health and dental plans using the same rate structure that applies to University staff. The University may waive the requirement to enroll if the Fellow is covered by equivalent insurance, or for religious reasons. If the Fellow fails to enroll within thirty days after appointment, the Fellow will be enrolled as a one-person subscriber.
2. Have the opportunity to enroll in the University group life insurance program at the same cost and under the same conditions as University faculty and staff.
3. Be covered by the University's worker's compensation insurance and, when traveling on University business, by the University's travel accident insurance.
4. Be listed in the appropriate University directories.
5. Have access to the University's libraries on the same basis as research faculty
6. Have the opportunity to use recreational facilities and to purchase athletic event tickets and University parking permits under the same conditions and at the same cost as for University faculty and staff.
7. Upon certification by the mentor of successful completion of training, the Office of the Vice President for Research will issue a suitable recognition to the Fellow and will notify the Alumni Records Office for inclusion of the Fellow in its records.

8. Fellows who receive a salary through their appointments, as described in section II A. 5., are eligible for:

- a. Annual vacation allowance equivalent to one month in twelve (22 workdays) for fellows appointed in yearlong increments. Fellows who are either part-time (i.e. less than 100% effort) or who are appointed for at least six months but less than one year shall receive a pro-rata vacation allowance. Fellows must take vacation time during the annual appointment period. The University will not provide pay in lieu of time off.
- b. Time off without loss of pay or stipend for all University holidays observed during the appointment period. If operational exigency requires that time off cannot be granted during the holiday, an equivalent amount of time off should be provided during another period of time.
- c. Time off without loss of pay or stipend during the University's Season Days, typically the four (4) work days between the days observed s the Christmas and New Year's holidays. If operational exigency requires that time off cannot be granted during the season day period, an equivalent amount of time off should be provided during another period of time.
- d. Up to three weeks per year of paid sick leave, if unable to fulfill responsibilities because of personal sickness, childbirth, or injury. The Fellow may also use the three weeks of paid leave to care for a family member due to personal sickness or injury. If the Fellow is ineligible for paid parental leave (less than six months' service), the Fellow may also use paid sick leave to bond with his or her newly born, newly adopted or newly fostered child within one year of the child's birth or arrival in the home.
- e. Six weeks per event of paid maternity (childbirth) leave for birth mothers for physical recovery immediately following biorth, provided that is consistent with the rules of the sponsor.
- f. Up to six weeks per event of paid parental leave for birth mothers, non-birth parents, adoptive parents to bond with a newborn or newly adopted or newly fostered child, or for legal guardianship of a child. A Fellow will become eligible for paid parental leave following a six-month period of employment as a Research Fellow, starting at the date of the first appointment, provided that it is consistent with the rules of the sponsor. Parental leave is available for use within one year of the event, and may be taken at one time or intermittently, with advanced notice and departmental approval, consistent with the rules of the sponsor.

e. Up to six (6) weeks per year of paid extended leave, if fellows are unable to fulfill responsibilities because of a qualifying disability, e.g., serious illness or serious injury. A Fellow will become eligible for paid extended leave following a six-month period of employment as a Research Fellow, starting at the date of the first appointment. A Fellow returning from extended leave must remain at work for at least six months to renew the extended leave benefit. Paid extended leave may be utilized in combination with the annual vacation allowance (II.D.8.a.) and/or paid sick and paid maternity (childbirth) leaves (II.D.8.d.)

**The following procedure must be followed for a Fellow to be eligible for Paid Extended Leave or Paid Maternity (childbirth) Leave:**

The Fellow must report the qualifying illness/injury/childbirth to the University's Work Connections program which provides confidential management of the event/condition while certifying eligibility to use paid extended leave. The Fellow is required to submit appropriate medical documentation to Work Connections. Work Connections will verify the qualifying medical disability, expected duration of absence and any work restrictions, and inform the hiring unit of the paid extended leave eligibility. Information about Work Connections and the authorization forms are available at: [Work Connections](http://www.workconnections.umich.edu/) (<http://www.workconnections.umich.edu/>).

9. Salaried Fellows who meet the eligibility requirements of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) are eligible under the FMLA to be absent from work without pay for up to twelve weeks in their FMLA benefit year for a qualifying event, with continuation of University contributions to insured benefit coverage during the period. Benefits under the FMLA will be administered concurrently with benefits from paid extended leave (8.e.) and paid maternity (childbirth) leave.

**Note:** Appointing units must maintain records related to attendance and usage of vacation, sick leave, paid extended leave, paid maternity (childbirth) leave allocations described in section D. 8.a., d. and e. above. No attendance or absence records are maintained for Research Fellows by the Payroll Office or other central units. University costs associated with vacation, sick, paid extended leaves, paid maternity (childbirth) leave, and paid parental leave will be assigned to the account from which the Fellow's salary is paid provided it is consistent with the rules of the sponsor and other external regulations. If the account is insufficient to cover the full cost of benefits, the unit must notify the appropriate fund area of Financial Operations and identify another suitable account to which the benefit costs can be charged.

## E. Withholding of Taxes and Reporting of Income

1. Federal and State income taxes and FICA taxes will be withheld and a Form W-2 filed with the IRS for Research Fellows as described in section II. A. (5.) above.
2. Exception: No Federal, State or FICA taxes will be withheld from payments issued to Fellows who are “scholar trainees” (as described in section II. A. 6.) because such payments are not considered “wages.” It is, however, “income” to the Fellow and may be taxable under Federal and State law.
3. Because a Form W-2 will not be issued, fellows may contact the Payroll Office to request a “fellowship letter” that will state the amount of fellowship received. The Fellow may use this letter as documentation when filing annual tax returns.

## F. Selection

Given the variety of existing postdoctoral programs, there are no uniform search or selection procedures that hiring units must follow prior to appointing an individual in a Research Fellow position. However, hiring units must observe University policies on non-discrimination and make good faith efforts to develop broad and inclusive selection pools when undertaking searches. When a hiring unit wants to move a Research Fellow to a regular faculty or staff appointment, it should follow the customary recruitment policies and procedures described in SPG 201.22 *Recruitment and Employment Process (Regular)*.

**Procedures:** [UHR Procedure for SPG 201.19](http://hr.umich.edu/procedures/spg201-19.html)  
(<http://hr.umich.edu/procedures/spg201-19.html>)

## File Attachments

Printable PDF of SPG Section 201.19, Postdoctoral Research Fellows  
(<http://spg.umich.edu/sites/default/files/policies/201x19.pdf>)

<b>SPG Number:</b> 201.19	<b>Applies To:</b> Research Fellows and Senior Research Fellows
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**Related Policies:**  
Recruitment and Employment (</policy/201.22>)

**Related Links:**

Procedures (<http://hr.umich.edu/procedures/spg201-19.html>)

Dispute Resolution for Postdoctoral Research Fellows

(<http://hr.umich.edu/acadhr/researchfellows/dispute.html>)

Rackham's Postdoctoral Scholars section (<http://www.rackham.umich.edu/postdoctoral/>)

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