

Program Policies

Letters of Appointment

When the training program director makes a firm offer of appointment to a postdoctoral fellow, a letter will be written to the candidate prior to the commencement of duties. This letter will set forth at least the basic terms of appointment including the period of appointment, the requirement of a minimum of 40 hours per week devoted to the research training (including coursework, DPRG seminars, postdoc lunches and research in the mentor's lab), the stipend level, all included benefits (which are health and dental insurance, 12 days of vacation, and 12 sick days per year) and a statement that the fellow's appointment is subject to all university policies. An NRSA Statement of Appointment will be completed prior to the start date. If the appointment is renewed or extended, that action will be documented by the creation of the second-year Statement of Appointment. The candidate will be required to return a countersigned copy of the letter of appointment indicating acceptance of the terms set forth within a week of the receipt of the letter. The letters (countersigned copies) and copies of the Statements of Appointment will be placed in a permanent file kept in the office of the program director. When the appointment is to be coterminous with external funding, the letter specifying those terms should come from the faculty sponsor after consultation with the program officials. Rules regarding additional support from research grants must be discussed with the program director's office prior to appointment.

Obligations of Trainees

Postdoctoral trainees have certain obligations to their mentor, the laboratory in which they are working, the department with which they are associated and/or the Department of Psychiatry, the grantor (NIMH) whose funds support them, and the university. These obligations include but are not limited to: (i) the conscientious discharge of their research responsibilities; (ii) conformity with ethical standards in research; (iii) observation of appropriate guidelines regarding human subjects; (iv) compliance with good laboratory practice, including the maintenance of adequate research records, and due observation of university standards regarding use of isotopes, chemicals, infectious agents, animals, and the like, if applicable; (v) open and timely discussion with their mentor regarding possession or distribution of materials, reagents, or records belonging to their laboratory and any proposed disclosure of findings or techniques privately or in publications; (vi) collegial conduct toward coworkers and members of the research group; (vii) compliance with all applicable university policies. All data and research records generated in university laboratories remain the property of the university.

Proof of Doctoral Degree

Eligibility for appointment as a postdoctoral trainee requires an advanced degree, for this program, a PhD, PsyD, MD or DMV. It is the responsibility of the fellow to provide transcripts that certify that she/he has received her/his degree; this documentation is included in the trainee's file attached to the letter of appointment. If the trainee has completed the requirements for the Ph.D. but has not yet received her/his degree, then she/he should supply documents certifying that all degree requirements have been met and indicating the date when the degree is expected to be conferred.

Stipend Level

Minimum stipend levels for postdoctoral trainees will be in accordance with the NIH recommended postdoctoral stipend levels. Because our funding period start date falls on July 1 each year, stipend increases must correspond with the appropriate fiscal year.

Compensation

An institution may provide additional funds to a trainee in the form of compensation (as salary and/or tuition remission) for services such as teaching, serving as a research assistant, or clinical services. A trainee may receive compensation for services as a research assistant or in some other position on a federal research grant, including a DHHS research grant. However, compensated services

should occur on a limited, part-time basis apart from the normal research training activities, which require a minimum of 40 hours per week. In addition, compensation may not be paid from a research grant supporting the research training experience. This additional compensation must be arranged directly through the sponsor and must be approved by the Program Director (see section "Letters of Appointment").

Terms of Appointment

According to NIH policy, no trainee may be appointed for a period of less than nine months; training program policy limits funding by the training grant to two years. Part-time training has never been allowed to date, but because NRSA rules have changed to allow it in extenuating circumstances, it would be considered if requested in writing and if agreed upon in advance by the sponsor and program officials. Part-time training for one month does not extend the period of support beyond 12 months for the annual appointment.

Orientation

All trainees will attend orientation sessions given by the UC Anschutz Medical Campus HR Department to select health and dental insurance and to learn basic university policies. In addition, each trainee will be given a copy of these guidelines, the telephone directory, parking policies, and an explanation of the mediation services available (ombudsperson). The training program office will arrange email accounts for the postdoctoral trainees who are located on the UCD campus; off campus trainees' sponsors should arrange for their email accounts. Off-campus trainees may have to comply with other rules and regulations at the training facility, which will be provided to them by their mentor.

Benefits

Trainees are eligible to receive single or family health insurance, with several choices of insurance plans, as well as dental coverage. This benefit is paid as an addition to the stipend. A premium will be deducted from the trainee's monthly paycheck. If the trainee elects to waive health insurance coverage through the university, she/he must certify in writing at the beginning of the appointment that she/he has alternate insurance that provides at least comparable coverage. Trainees can receive dental coverage without having to enroll for health coverage. Sick and vacation hours (12 and 12 days per year, respectively) should be reported to the program manager on a monthly basis; the trainee is responsible for keeping a record of hours accrued and used and for notifying the sponsor of upcoming time off to coordinate with the needs of the mentor's program and other staff absences.

Leaves of Absence

Individuals requiring periods of time away from their research training experience longer than specified here must seek approval from the NIH awarding component for an unpaid leave of absence (contact the program administrator to initiate this approval). At the beginning of a leave of absence, the trainee must submit a Termination Notice (PHS Form 416-7), and upon return from the leave of absence, the trainee must be formally reappointed to the grant by submitting an updated Statement of Appointment (PHS Form 2271). Trainees within the first twelve months of postdoctoral support must also submit a Payback Agreement (PHS Form 6031) upon return from a leave of absence.

Service Payback Provisions

As specified in the NIH Revitalization Act of 1993, NRSA recipients incur a service payback obligation only during their first 12 months of postdoctoral support. Additionally, the act specifies that the second and subsequent years of postdoctoral NRSA training will serve to pay back a postdoctoral service payback obligation. Accordingly, the following guidelines apply:

- Postdoctoral trainees in the first 12 months of postdoctoral NRSA support must sign the Payback Agreement Form (PHS form 6031) before initiating an appointment. Postdoctoral trainees in their first 12 months of support will incur a period of service payback obligation equal to the period of support.
- Postdoctoral trainees in the 13th and subsequent months of NRSA postdoctoral support are not required to sign the payback agreement form and will not incur a service payback obligation for this period of support. In addition, the 13th and subsequent months of postdoctoral NRSA support are considered acceptable payback service for prior postdoctoral support. For example, postdoctoral trainees who continue under that award for two years have fulfilled the obligation incurred during the first 12 months of support by the end of the second year.
- Service payback obligations can also be paid back after termination of NRSA support by conducting health-related research or teaching averaging more than 20 hours per week of a full work year.
- Recipients with service obligations must begin to provide acceptable payback service on a continuous basis within two years of termination of NRSA support. The period for undertaking payback service may be delayed for such reasons as temporary disability, completion of residency requirements, or completion of the requirements for a graduate degree. Requests for an extension must be made in writing to the NIH specifying the need for additional time and the length of the required extension.
- Recipients of NRSA support are responsible for informing the NIH of changes in their status or contact information such as address.
- For individuals who fail to fulfill their obligation through service, the United States is entitled to recover the total amount of NRSA funds paid to the individual for the obligated period plus interest at a rate determined by the secretary of the treasury. Financial payback must be completed within three years beginning on the date the United States becomes entitled to recover such amount.
- Per NIH, NIH Loan Repayment Program payback agreements CAN NOT be fulfilled simultaneously with fellowship payback agreements.
- Under certain conditions, the secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (or those delegated this authority) may extend the period for starting service or repayment, permit breaks in service, or in rare cases in which service or financial repayment would constitute an extreme hardship, may waive or suspend the payback obligation of an individual. Detailed information on the accrual and repayment of the NRSA service payback obligation and waivers can be found in the NIH Grants Policy Statement.
- Officials at the awardee institution have the responsibility of explaining the terms of the payback requirements to all prospective training candidates before appointment to the training grant. Additionally, all trainees recruited into the training program must be provided with information related to the career options that might be available when they complete the program. The suitability of such career options as methods to satisfy the NRSA service payback obligation must be discussed.

Mediation Services

It is recognized that from time to time disagreements may arise between postdoctoral trainee and mentor. Postdoctoral trainees should be clearly informed about the options that they can exercise under such circumstances. In particular, they should be made aware of services available through the office of the program ombudsperson.

Application for Grants

Postdoctoral trainees may not apply for grants as principal investigator. At CU Anschutz Medical Campus, faculty appointment at the level of instructor is required to be a PI. Trainees may apply for mentored grants, such as K Award and NRSA.

DPEF Grants

Trainees are encouraged to apply for pilot funds through the Developmental Psychobiology Endowment Fund (DPEF) of the DPRG. This process should begin by contacting the DPRG Executive Director to discuss the planned research.

Manuscripts

Any manuscript resulting from work done during the postdoctoral training period should acknowledge the following: "This work (or) [named author] was supported by USPHS grant T32 MH15442, 'Development of Psychopathology, Psychobiology & Behavior' (UCD Institutional Postdoctoral Research Training Program)."

Sign Out

A Notice of Termination (PHS form 416-7) must be completed by the trainee prior to the completion of the appointment, and all university sign-out procedures must be completed. Health insurance benefits will end on the last day of the final month of the appointment.

Follow Up

Because progress reports and renewal applications require the tracking of graduates, graduates of the postdoctoral training program are expected to keep in touch with the program in perpetuity. Notification should be made to the program administrator regarding change of address or employment and any news of importance (grant awards, published manuscripts, honors, etc).