



UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN STANDARD PRACTICE GUIDE

SECTION: Personnel **Number:** 201.19
SUBJECT: Postdoctoral Research Fellows **Revised:** 04/30/2010
APPLIES TO: Research Fellows and Senior Research Fellows **Date Issued:**
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Attachments: 1
ISSUED BY: Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and University Human Resources
OWNER: Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

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.



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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." The hiring units of "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, with an Additional Pay Earnings Code of FEL that labels the money the unit will pay to the trainee as a fellowship.
 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.



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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. (Attachment 'A' provides a generic sample of such a process. Appointing units should devise guidelines appropriate to their own culture and organizational context).
- 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 travelling on University business, by the University's travel accident insurance
 - 4) Be listed in the appropriate University directory(ies)
 - 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



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annual appointment period. The University will not provide pay in lieu of time off.

- b. 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, childbirth, or injury, or to care for his or her newly born, newly adopted or newly fostered child.

Note: Appointing units must maintain records related to attendance and usage of vacation or sick leave allocations described in D. 8.a. and b. above. No attendance or absence records are maintained for Research Fellows by the Payroll Office or other central units. University costs associated with vacation and sick leave will be assigned to the account from which the Fellow's salary is paid. 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.

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



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ATTACHMENT A

Generic Sample Grievance Procedure for Research Fellows and Senior Research Fellows

Applicability

The following procedures are available to Research Fellows who wish to complain of any action or inaction, within the jurisdiction or control of (name of unit), which the Fellow alleges to be in violation of law or University policy or to be unfair, arbitrary, or capricious.

- A. The fellow shall seek first to resolve the matter by informal means through his or her mentor/supervisor.
- B. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved satisfactorily, the Fellow shall then seek resolution by informal means through the mentor/supervisor's Department chair, division chief (in the Medical School), Associate Dean/Associate Director, or other designated official in units without a departmental structure.
- C. If the matter is still not satisfactorily resolved, the Fellow may request resolution by the Dean or Director of (unit). The Fellow shall file a written statement with the Dean or Director stating the alleged wrong, the facts that the Fellow believes support the allegations, and the disposition of the matter at prior informal steps.
- D. The Dean or Director shall seek to resolve the matter promptly.
 1. The Dean or Director may seek advice from an appropriate standing committee, or establish an ad hoc committee for advice on the matter.
 2. Before the Dean or Director decides a case, he or she should consult with the Office of Academic Human Resources or the Office of the General Counsel to assure correct and consistent interpretation of University policy and/or the law.

When the Dean (or Director) decides the matter, the Dean or Director or his or her designee will convey to the Fellow in writing the decision and the reasons for it.