



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

Operating Policy and Procedure

HSC OP: 70.29, **Employment of Postdoctoral Fellows**

PURPOSE: The purpose of this HSC OP is to define policies relating to the hiring, supervision, and development of all Postdoctoral Fellows at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) hired after July 1, 2014.

REVIEW: This HSC OP will be reviewed by March 1 of each even-numbered year (ENY) by the Executive Vice President for Research and Innovation (EVPRI), with recommendations for revision forwarded to the Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer.

POLICY:

1. Definitions

- a. **Postdoctoral Fellow.** A postdoctoral scholar ("Postdoc"), as defined by the National Postdoctoral Association, NIH and NSF, *"An individual who has received a doctoral degree (or equivalent) and is engaged in a temporary and defined period of mentored advanced training to enhance the professional skills and research independence needed to pursue his or her chosen career path."*
 - i. This operating policy applies to any individual appointed to this position classification, regardless of title, including, but not limited to, "postdoctoral scholar," "postdoctoral fellow," and "postdoctoral research associate."
- b. **Employment Status.** Postdocs are considered to be regular staff employees and are eligible for all applicable benefits. However, due to the unique, temporary, and training nature of the position, it is not intended to be an extended position. It is an opportunity to acquire skills and experience to prepare individuals for their continued education and professional growth. The position may be full-time or part-time, depending on the needs of the department.
- c. **Employment at Will.** TTUHSC recognizes the essential role Postdocs play in the scholarly mission of the research initiatives of the institution. However, all employees serve at the will of TTUHSC.
 - i. In this employment-at-will relationship, the employee or TTUHSC may sever the relationship at any time at either's discretion. However, job performance deficiencies should be documented and discussed with the Postdoc at any time as these occur, along with methods to correct the deficiencies, but this in no way is intended to create an agreement between the Postdoc and TTUHSC. [OP 70.31](#) is to be followed in this situation.
 - ii. Employment as a Postdoc is for no fixed or definite term. However, employment duration of longer than five years must be approved in writing by the department Chair and the EVPRI at least six (6) months prior to the termination of the fifth year of employment.
 - iii. Nothing in this operating policy constitutes a contract, a contractual relationship, or a guarantee of continued employment for a specified period of time.

iv. A Postdoctoral position is not intended to be or become a long-term career path.

2. **Postdoc Appointments.** Postdoc appointments are characterized by the following conditions:

- a. The appointee was recently (normally within the last five years) awarded a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate (e.g., D.Sc., M.D.).
- b. The appointment involves substantial full-time research or scholarship.
- c. The appointee works under the supervision of a TTUHSC-employed faculty member.
- d. The appointee is expected to publish the results of the research or scholarship accomplished.
- e. The appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time academic and/or research career.

3. **Hiring Process.** A Postdoc position shall be filled by conducting a search following HSC OP 70.11. Appointments to Non-Faculty Positions. Job requirements are established by the department and are subject to the approval of the dean. They must be in accordance with TTUHSC policy as specified below.

- a. Completion of a doctoral degree in the appropriate discipline is required. The doctoral degree must have been completed within the five years immediately preceding the first date of appointment as a Postdoc. An exception to the requirement of completion of the doctorate in the past five years can be made in situations where it can be demonstrated that the individual is changing fields.
- b. Only the EVPRI has the authority to sign the offer letter. Faculty members who discuss a potential position with candidates should advise the candidate that no offer is final until the letter is received from the authorized signatory.
- c. All letters of offer of employment shall be issued on a form provided by the Office of the EVPRI and require an authorized signature by the EVPRI or his/her designee. A copy of the signed letter of offer shall be sent to the HR office and scanned into the Postdoc's personnel file.
- d. The hiring department is responsible for confirming that the prospective Postdoc meets all eligibility requirements prior to the commencement of the appointment.

4. **Training and Development.** The intent of the Postdoc experience is to be considered a professional training opportunity.

- a. The goal of the training is to *prepare* individuals to follow scientific careers that draw on their unique, in-depth education and expertise in research. Additionally, the experience is to:
 - i. Provide advanced research training beyond the doctoral degree.
 - ii. Prepare individuals to follow scientific careers.
- b. The primary responsibility for a successful training experience lies with the Postdoc. Therefore, Postdocs must demonstrate high levels of productivity, initiative, and commitment to research excellence.
- c. The Postdoc must complete all ethics training mandated by the Office of Research, as well as other training required of TTUHSC employees.

5. **Faculty Mentor Responsibilities:**

- a. Engage the Postdoc in meaningful research activities and projects.
- b. Discuss performance expectations with the Postdoc and meet regularly to discuss performance outcomes and effectively address deficiencies.
- c. Encourage the presentation of the Postdoc's work internally and externally with due recognition.
- d. Provide career guidance and assist him or her in setting realistic career goals.
- e. Provide a formal annual review of project/career progress. Provide mechanisms for the Postdoc to provide feedback to the Department Chair on the quality of mentoring.
- f. Supervise the Postdoc's awareness of and compliance with institutional policies and mandatory training requirements.
- g. Recognize that the Postdoc is part of the TTUHSC community with responsibilities and opportunities that transcend the specific laboratory of appointment.

6. **Non-Discrimination.**

TTUHSC does not discriminate against any applicant or employee regarding training, development, or other employment actions with regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, or protected veteran status in compliance with the laws and regulations of the State of Texas, Regents' Rules, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Texas Tech University System Regulation 10.03, and all other applicable federal laws.

7. **Right to Change Policy.** TTUHSC reserves the right to interpret, change, modify, amend, or rescind this policy in whole or in part at any time without prior notice to or without the consent of employees.