

TENNESSEE TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

36. Postdoctoral Research/Scholars Policy

A. Purpose

The purpose is to provide recent graduates who have completed their doctoral degrees (Ph.D., Sc.D., M.D., D.D.S. and equivalent doctorates) the opportunity to continue their development and preparation for full-time academic or research careers, and to broaden their research skills under the guidance of senior scholars in their field.

B. Definition

Postdoctoral Research Associate: A Postdoctoral Research Associate is an individual possessing a doctorate or **professional degree** equivalent to a doctorate holding a one-year or less (but not less than 6 months) renewable appointment at the request of the faculty mentor not to exceed 2 one year renewals. A Postdoctoral Research Associate must have been awarded a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate in an appropriate field within the previous three years (the first appointment must be within this 3 year period). The primary purpose of the appointment is to provide for continued education, training or experience in research, normally under the supervision of a senior mentor. The appointment involves substantially full-time research or scholarship. The appointment carries no academic rank, although it confers on the appointee the status of TTU employee. The appointee has the freedom, and is expected, to publish the results of his or her research or scholarship (performed at TTU) and during the period of the appointment.

This policy statement neither speaks to nor affects those individuals currently appointed in the related category of "Research Associates" currently allocated to TTU Admin Pay Plan Grade 8 or "Research Assistant Professors" (a non-tenure track specific term faculty appointment which may serve as principal investigator and teach as a regular part of the job and is subject to normal Human Resources/Equal Opportunity policies and procedures.

Postdoctoral Fellow: A postdoctoral fellowship is an award, usually externally funded, to an individual for the purpose of continued training after receipt of the doctorate. The title of Postdoctoral Fellow can be used only when the associated stipend is intended to support the individual's own learning and research. The postdoctoral fellow is not performing a service to the University and, therefore, cannot be considered an employee.

Postdoctoral Fellows – "true fellows" (under IRS Rules and with restrictions imposed by such federal agencies as NIH and NSF that may prohibit compensated work as a supplement to the stipend award) are subject to the policies governing students at the university and are not employees of the University subject to day-to-day direction.

If the terms of the award to a Postdoctoral Fellow allow the appointee to take some part-time work to supplement his or her fellowship stipend, the candidate must, in addition to the basic appointment, be appointed as a Research Assistant, Research Associate or Research Assistant Professor.

Research-track Appointments – This policy does not apply to research-track appointments as defined in TBR policy 5:02:07:10 (Faculty Appointments in Universities). Appointment of such positions, whether

designated as Research Assistant Professor, Research Scholar, Visiting Research Faculty or the like, are to follow TBR policy and regular TTU policy regarding employment procedures.

C. Salaries

The salaries of Postdoctoral Research Associates are set by the faculty mentor in conjunction with the department head and academic dean. The annual salary may not be below the department's highest salary paid to a graduate research assistant and may not exceed the department's lowest salary paid to a full-time tenure-track faculty member. Postdoctoral Research Associates are staff employees of the University and at anytime during the appointment are eligible for supplementary compensation at the discretion of the dean and the faculty mentor.

D. Benefits

Postdoctoral Research Associates, as employees of the University, are entitled to the same benefits as benefit eligible staff with the exception of tuition assistance. In compliance with TBR and university policy, as regular employees, Postdoctoral Research Associates are eligible for full employee benefits, including health insurance and retirement. The state-supported retirement system includes a portable optional retirement program, suitable for researchers on grant funding.

Postdoctoral Research Associates on annual contracts are not eligible for TTU merit, across the board or equity adjustments.

E. Privileges and Obligations

As employees of the University, Postdoctoral Research Associates are eligible to use the University's research facilities and offices that are assigned by the faculty mentor or the department. Postdoctoral Research Associates have the obligation to abide by the university's policies. Failure of a Postdoctoral Research Associate to abide by the policies and regulations of the University or the school are grounds for discipline and may result in termination or dismissal.

F. Search/Advertising

The University will maintain a standing notice on the HR website (revised every six months) of the opportunity for appointment as a Postdoctoral Research Associate and will refer all applicants to the appropriate department.

The recruitment of a Postdoctoral Research Associate shall conform to normal Human Resources/Equal Opportunity policies and procedures except: 1) advertising requirements are reduced to 14 days in the recommended sources that are approved in the Recruitment Plan, 2) the pool and interview approval process shall be combined and 3) for purposes of postdoctoral appointments, search committees shall be defined as the faculty mentor working with the unit head(s). A Checklist for Postdoctoral Research Appointments is attached and made a part of this policy. The University's policies on non-discrimination must be observed and good faith efforts are to be made to include minorities and females in the selection pool.

Approval of Applicant Pool – In accordance with Tennessee Board of Regents Guidelines, candidates considered to be qualified by the faculty mentor and or search committee will be forwarded to the coordinator of Affirmative Action.

Demographic information for all Postdoctoral Research Associates appointed at the university will be recorded on the university's personnel/payroll system. Payments to Postdoctoral Research Associates will be administered through Human Resources / Payroll.

G. Appointment

Under the Eligibility To Work Regulation: I-9 Requirement, Postdoctoral Research Associates, regardless of citizenship, may not receive salary from a research contract or grant, or from a department account, without a valid I-9 Form. The Immigration Reform Control Act of 1987 requires a completed valid I-9 form and no exceptions can be made.

Departments must contact the Office of International Students early in the recruitment process when it becomes evident a candidate for a Postdoctoral Research Assistant appointment is not a citizen or permanent resident of the United States. The process of obtaining necessary governmental approval must begin prior to an offer of appointment being made so that it is completed before the first day of employment.

Appointment Offer Letter

Postdoctoral Research Associates appointed at the university must be issued a University letter that sets forth the terms of the appointment.

The school/college dean must sign the appointment offer letter. The appointment letter must be countersigned by the Postdoctoral Research Associate, received by the school, and filed with the Office of the Provost and Office of Human Resources prior to the initiation of the appointment.

The letter is not an offer of a job. It is a statement of the terms and conditions of the position. The applicant will indicate his/her acceptance of the terms by signing the letter and returning the signed original to the faculty sponsor/mentor.

The Postdoctoral Research Associate applicant must provide a copy of the doctoral diploma or other certification (with translation into English if it is in a foreign language) that indicates that the terminal degree has been completed satisfactorily. If the doctoral candidate has completed but not yet obtained a degree, she or he should provide evidence that a thesis has been approved together with a documented indication of the expected date of formal graduation. It is the responsibility of the faculty mentor to verify this documentation. The documentation is to be filed with the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of Human Resources. Upon acceptance of the terms and condition of the position, and University approval of the contract, the applicant will be sent a one-year (or less) contract/appointment letter from TTU. Upon signing and acceptance of the contract the Postdoctoral Research Associate would be ready to begin the research program at TTU. Under no circumstances should a Postdoctoral Research Associate begin work until completing all necessary paper work such as I-9 certification, completion of an employment contract and completion of a Personnel Action Form (PAF).

The appointment letter is to include the following:

- The laboratory, institute, department or school inviting the Postdoctoral Research Associate to visit;
- The faculty member who will serve as the mentor;
- The term of the appointment, with starting and ending dates;
- The expectation that the Postdoctoral Research Associate will be involved in essentially full-time research or scholarship;
- The university's restrictions on the length of appointment;
- The source of funding, if any, to support the Postdoctoral Scholar's research;
- Whether the appointment of Postdoctoral Research Associate will end at the conclusion of a particular externally funded grant;
- The Postdoctoral Research Associate's monthly salary and benefits;
- A statement that a Postdoctoral appointment is subject to university policies, including the policy defining Intellectual Property rights;
- Confidentiality statement

Length of Appointment and Renewal

The initial Postdoctoral Research Associate appointment at the university is for a period of one year or less (but not less than 6 months), renewable for 2 additional years with an annual reappointment and new annual employment contract. Appointments of Postdoctoral Research Associates should not exceed three years, unless approved in advance by the Provost. Since the budget period of an external research or training grant may overlap with the University's academic year, the termination date is the earlier of the appointment year, or the time when the funding of the award is exhausted and not renewed by the awarding agency. There is no obligation to renew an appointment.

If the Postdoctoral Research Associate wishes to remain at TTU at the conclusion of three years, he or she must go through the normal TTU competitive hiring process for staff or faculty positions.

Notice of Non Renewal of Appointments

Postdoctoral Research Associates who are not to be re-appointed shall be notified in writing by their sponsor/mentor and given reasonable time (at least thirty days advance notice), but whether or not such notice is given, the appointment ends on the designated date or on June 30 if no date is designated. In addition, appointments may be prematurely terminated without cause at the discretion of the dean of the school, after consultation with the mentor, on thirty days notice.

Postdoctoral Research Associates are eligible to serve as co-principal investigators on grant applications, but may not be principal investigators unless a specific waiver and approval is granted upon recommendation by the department and approval of the appropriate dean of the school.

Intellectual Property – Terms and conditions spelled out in the University's Intellectual Property Policy

Ancillary Teaching Assignment

Postdoctoral Research Associates may receive a concurrent part-time, non-tenure track faculty designation and, if so, may engage in limited teaching, but only as an ancillary responsibility, and only in strict accordance with the Faculty handbook. If a Postdoctoral Research Associate is granted a teaching assignment, he or she may teach no more frequently than one course per academic year.

If extraordinary permission is granted by the Provost to teach more than one course per year, in no case will a Postdoctoral Research Associate teach more than one course a semester. A Postdoctoral Research Associate may not teach more than a total of four courses while at the University, unless special permission is obtained from the provost.

H. Responsibility to Monitor

The Office of Academic Affairs and the Associate Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies shall have responsibility for monitoring policies to assure consistent application throughout the University.

Tennessee Technological University
Checklist for Postdoctoral Research Appointments
{Print this Checklist, check (✓) tasks as completed, and submit with final paperwork.}

STEP 1

Approval to Fill Position. A memo requesting approval to fill a particular position should be initiated in the department where the need exists. **Signatures required:** Department Chair or Director, Dean, Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Affirmative Action Officer, Human Resources Director. The memo should include the following: qualifications, essential functions, salary information, funding source, application procedure, and application deadline or screening date, and the plan for advertising. Also included with the memo should be the most recent blanket advertising copy for postdoctoral research positions and a shortened newspaper ad version of the position description to be advertised for a minimum of 14 calendar days from the original HR posting date.

STEP 2

Pool and Interview Approval. After the screening/application deadline has passed and the faculty mentor that will supervise the post-doctoral research associate has evaluated the applicants, a memo requesting approval of the applicant pool and permission to interview selected candidates must be sent to the Affirmative Action Officer via the Department Chair/Dean. This approval process requires that the evaluation matrix form, all applicant files, and any written justification for the choice of interviewees be included.

STEP 3

Permission to Hire. Once interviews have been conducted and a candidate has been recommended for hire by the search committee, a memo requesting approval to hire the candidate of choice and supporting documentation should be submitted to the Human Resources Director, via the Department Chair/Dean, Affirmative Action Officer, and Vice-President of Academic Affairs. This memo should be accompanied by: **1) Completed PAF (Personnel Action Form), 2) Verification of Affirmative Action Data for Appointment form, 3) all applicant files, 4) copies of advertisements and anything relevant to the search, and 5) this checklist.** Make a list of applicants' addresses at this point; applicant pool will not be returned.

STEP 4

Making an Offer. No commitment can be made, nor can any position be offered to a candidate until all approvals have been granted. Once approvals have been granted and the position can be officially offered, a representative from the Human Resources office will notify the department by telephone. Official transcripts for the highest degree earned are required for all postdoctoral research positions.