



University of Connecticut Health Center

POLICY NUMBER 2002-2

February 1, 2002

**POLICY: POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWS EMPLOYMENT,
MENTORING, & CAREER DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

POLICY STATEMENT:

Improvements in postdoctoral training policies are needed to keep careers in biomedical research an attractive and desirable option for young scientists. The postdoctoral fellowship period is designed to be a period of research training “for the purpose of gaining scientific, technical and other professional skills that advance the professional career”¹. Furthermore, postdoctoral fellows represent an important group of research trainees at the University of Connecticut Health Center and greatly enhance the Institution’s research programs and the research environment. This document describes hiring, mentoring and employment practices that will ensure that the postdoctoral training period here at UCHC is appropriate and beneficial for postdoctoral fellows.

1. Mentoring and career development for postdoctoral fellows:

- a. The Office of the Associate Dean of the Graduate School is responsible for facilitating mentoring and career development for postdoctoral fellows. This will include sponsored workshops covering areas including CV preparation, presentation of job seminars (how to look for jobs in academia and industry), grant and paper writing, immigration issues and an ethics course. Training programs for faculty mentors will be established to aid faculty in appropriately mentoring postdoctoral fellows.
- b. The Office of the Associate Dean of the Graduate School will fulfill the role of ombudsman or liaison to resolve grievances from postdoctoral fellows that cannot be resolved at the level of the appropriate Department Head/Center Director. If the postdoctoral fellow’s advisor is the Department Chair or Center Director, the postdoctoral fellow should go directly to the Office of the Associate Dean of the Graduate School for help. If the grievance cannot be resolved by the Associate Dean of the Graduate School, (i.e. either side is dissatisfied), the Associate Dean will convene an ad hoc committee consisting of three senior faculty members who are not in the fellow’s department and who either currently or recently have had postdoctoral fellows in their laboratory. The recommendations of this ad hoc committee will be transmitted to the Dean of the School in which the fellow is appointed for final resolution.

To encourage social interaction and career development, the Office of the Associate Dean of the Graduate School will support efforts to establish a postdoctoral scholars association at UCHC.

2. Employment practices related to postdoctoral fellows:
 - a. Postdoctoral fellows must receive at a minimum an annual written evaluation prepared by their faculty mentor that is signed by both the fellow and the mentor. Written evaluations should include a brief narrative on progress during the year, whether the fellow is meeting expectations and plans for future career development. The content of the evaluation must be discussed at a meeting between the mentor and fellow. Copies of the written evaluations must be kept on file in the Departmental or Center office.
 - b. Appointment letters for postdoctoral fellowship positions must include the research area, guaranteed minimum term of appointment (assuming performance is satisfactory and the UCHC Code of Conduct is not violated), level of compensation, and an attachment describing UCHC policies related to postdoctoral fellows which will include but not be limited to the Policy on Postdoctoral Research Fellows (this document) and the institutional and NIH policies on authorship and ownership of intellectual property and data. Appointment letters must be approved by the Department Head/Center Director, the appropriate Dean's office and successfully pass any required background checks administered by the Department of Human Resources.
 - c. It is expected that a reasonable amount of time be allotted each year for vacations to be negotiated with the faculty mentor. The workload/work schedule of postdoctoral fellows should reasonably balance both the needs for professional and personal development.
 - d. Starting July 1, 2002, the minimum annual salaries of all fulltime postdoctoral fellows will be raised to \$25,000. Thereafter, the salaries of all fulltime postdoctoral fellows will be raised progressively by \$2,000 per year, or by whatever lesser amount is required to bring their salaries to the prevailing NIH annual stipend for postdoctorals with zero experience, (currently \$31,092). Individual fellows may, of course, negotiate higher stipends depending on their years of experience or other considerations.

The annual salaries of fulltime postdoctoral fellows hired subsequent to the acceptance of this policy (and for whom no prior salary arrangements have been made) are encouraged to be at the NIH recommended level for the level of experience, but in no case can be less than \$25,000 as of July 1, 2002, and \$27,000 in the year following.

Exceptions to these requirements may be made by the appropriate Dean (or his/her designate) on appeal.

- e. In cases of termination due to failure to meet performance expectations or due to lack of funding, the postdoctoral fellow must be notified in writing at least three months prior to the termination date. Violations of the UCHC Code of Conduct may result in less notification.
- f. The period of training for Postdoctoral fellows should generally not exceed 5 years duration at UCHC. Exceptions require approval of the Department Head or Center Director and the appropriate Dean.

Executive Vice President for Health Affairs

Date

Replaces: NEW POLICY

¹ Enhancing the Postdoctoral Experience for Scientists and Engineers, A Guide for Postdoctoral Scholars, Advisers, Institutions, Funding Organizations, and Disciplinary Societies; National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine; 2000: National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.; <http://www4.nationalacademies.org/pd/postdoc.nsf>