TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents ........................................................................................................................................1
Introduction ..................................................................................................................................................2

STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

Handbook Parameters .................................................................................................................................3
Definition of a Postdoctoral Scholar ...........................................................................................................3
Expectations and Responsibilities ................................................................................................................4
  Expectations and Responsibilities of Postdoctoral Scholars ....................................................................4
  Expectations and Responsibilities of Faculty Mentors ............................................................................4
Appointment Standards and Guidelines .....................................................................................................5
  Titles .......................................................................................................................................................5
    Postdoctoral Scholar – Research (job code 9180) .................................................................................5
    Postdoctoral Scholar – Clinical (job code 9194) ..................................................................................5
    Postdoctoral Scholar – Instructional (job code 9195) .........................................................................5
Job Codes and Salary Plans .......................................................................................................................6
Appointment Criteria ..................................................................................................................................6
Terms of Service .........................................................................................................................................7
Salary and Stipends .................................................................................................................................7
Appointment Percentage ..........................................................................................................................8
Notice of Appointment – Offer Letters .....................................................................................................9
Annual Reviews and Individual Development Plans ................................................................................9
Corrective Action, Termination, and Resignation Policies .....................................................................10
Diversity and EEO ....................................................................................................................................10
Grievance Policy .....................................................................................................................................11
International Postdoctoral Scholars .........................................................................................................11
  Health Insurance Requirement ..............................................................................................................13
Grants & Research Endeavors ..................................................................................................................13
Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Requirements & Training .......................................................14
Teaching .....................................................................................................................................................15
Administrative Roles ...............................................................................................................................15
Office of Postdoctoral Affairs ..................................................................................................................16
Frequently Asked Questions ...................................................................................................................17
INTRODUCTION

The postdoctoral experience emphasizes scholarship and continued research training for individuals who have recently completed a doctoral degree. Postdoctoral scholars are not only essential to the research and scholarly mission of the University of South Florida System, but also enrich the USF research community with their knowledge and expertise. The university strives to enhance the postdoctoral experience by providing a stimulating and constructive environment, and encouraging mutual respect and understanding. Interdisciplinary and of the highest caliber, USF’s postdoctoral scholars engage in research training under the general oversight of distinguished faculty mentors in preparation for careers in academe, industry, government, and the non-profit sector.

Several years ago, the University of South Florida embarked on an ambitious program to enhance its rising stature as a pre-eminent research university with state, national and global impact, and position itself for membership in the Association of American Universities through: (1) expanding world-class interdisciplinary research, creative and scholarly endeavors; (2) promoting globally competitive programs in teaching and research; (3) expanding local and global engagement initiatives to strengthen sustainable and healthy communities; and (4) enhancing revenue through external support. Details are available in the USF Strategic Plan (http://www.ods.usf.edu/plans/strategic/).

As part of this initiative, the university made a firm commitment to grow and develop the postdoctoral experience in the USF System. These postdoctoral scholars contribute to the academic community by enhancing the research and education programs of the University. They are provided the opportunity to work alongside distinguished faculty who are renowned in their fields, so as to prepare for a career position in academia, industry, government, or the nonprofit sector. They bring expertise and creativity that enrich the research environment for all members of the University community, including graduate and undergraduate students, and they are essential to the research and scholarly mission of the University of South Florida System.

Postdoctoral work provides essential training in many disciplines for individuals pursuing academic careers and may include opportunities to enhance teaching and other professional skills. USF strives to provide a stimulating, constructive, and dynamic experience for the postdocs by emphasizing the mutual commitment and responsibility of the University, the faculty, the students, and the postdoctoral scholars. Our goal is for each postdoctoral scholar to have an exemplary professional and personal development experience while at USF. We hope this handbook will help you get off to a great start here and in the Tampa Bay community. You will find practical and useful information as well as resources to help you settle into your life and work in the USF System.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The Standards and Guidelines outlined in this handbook were extrapolated from data obtained from the National Postdoctoral Association, Arizona State University, Brandeis University, Duke University, Emory University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, North Carolina State University, Rutgers University, State University of New York - Buffalo, Stony Brook University, University of Alabama - Birmingham, University of California - Irvine, University of California - San Diego, University of Cincinnati, University of Illinois - Chicago, University of Minnesota, University of Pittsburgh, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Yale University.
**HANDBOOK PARAMETERS**

These standards and guidelines define and set forth terms and conditions relating to employment of postdoctoral scholars in the USF System. It applies to both postdoctoral scholars who are considered employees of the USF System and postdoctoral scholars who are paid stipends by extramural agencies, either directly or through the USF Division of Sponsored Research. The University reserves the right to modify this document at its discretion with or without notice.

* * * *

**DEFINITION OF A POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLAR**

“*A postdoctoral scholar is an individual holding a doctoral degree who is engaged in a temporary period of mentored research and/or scholarly training for the purpose of acquiring the professional skills needed to pursue a career path of his or her choosing. Postdoctoral appointees can pursue basic, clinical or translational projects so long as their primary effort is devoted toward their own scholarship. Postdocs are essential to the scholarly mission of the mentor and host institution, and thus are expected to have the freedom to publish the results of their scholarship.*”

--National Postdoctoral Association

A USF System Postdoctoral Scholar’s appointment must meet the following conditions:

1. the appointee was recently awarded a doctorate degree in an appropriate field; and
2. the appointment is time-limited; and
3. the appointment involves substantial research, or scholarship; and
4. the appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time academic and/or research career; and
5. the appointee works under the supervision of a faculty mentor or senior scholar; and
6. the appointment may be part of a clinical training program, if research training under the supervision of a mentor is a primary purpose of the appointment; and
7. the appointee has the freedom, and is expected, to publish the results of his or her research or scholarship.

* Adapted from the Association of American Universities Committee on Postdoctoral Education Report and Recommendations ([http://www.aau.edu](http://www.aau.edu)).

If an individual does not meet the criteria for employment as a Postdoctoral Scholar, please consult Human Resources for other available positions (e.g., applicable faculty lines, research associate, assistant in research, associate in research, etc.).
**EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Expectations and responsibilities of postdoctoral scholars**

- The conscientious discharge of research or scholarship responsibilities, which may include teaching responsibilities for postdoctoral scholars.
- Conformance to standards of responsible, ethical conduct in research, including taking all current required training.
- Compliance with all relevant federal, state and municipal regulations and guidelines that relate to human subjects research, the care and use of laboratory animals, and the use of hazardous materials.
- Compliance with good scholarly and research practice.
- Open and timely discussion with the faculty mentor regarding all facets of the postdoctoral appointee’s research activities.
- Accurate and timely recording and documentation of research results.
- Prompt disclosure to the mentor regarding the possession and desire to distribute materials, reagents, software, copyrightable and potentially patentable discoveries derived from the postdoctoral scholar’s research.
- Collegial conduct towards members of the research group.
- Compliance with all applicable policies and procedures of the University and the department/responsible unit.
- Maintenance of a laboratory notebook (if applicable) and/or other comparable records of research activity, which remain the property of USF upon termination.
- Adherence to university standards regarding use of isotopes, chemicals, infectious agents, animals, human subjects, and the like (if applicable).

**Expectations and responsibilities of faculty mentors**

- Guide and monitor the advanced training of postdoctoral scholars.
- Provide clear goals, objectives, and expectations of the training program and the responsibilities of postdoctoral scholars at the time of hire and update as needed.
- Communicate regularly with postdoctoral scholars in order to provide regular and timely assessments of their performance, as well as providing career advice and job placement assistance.
- Write an annual evaluation of performance and progress of the postdoctoral scholar’s activities in a manner that is clear and timely.
- Provide an appropriate educational experience that helps to advance the career of the postdoctoral appointee.
• Provide mentoring with an emphasis on development of independence including providing
detailed advice and assistance on the development of a specific research project.

APPOINTMENT STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

Titles
The title of a postdoctoral scholar appointment is based on whether the employee will be performing
scholarly research, clinical training, or instructional assignments.

Postdoctoral Scholar – Research (job code 9180)
An individual who has received a doctoral degree (or equivalent) and is engaged in a defined
period of mentored advanced training to enhance the professional skills and research
independence needed to pursue his or her chosen career path. This training includes all
relevant academic activities related to the preparation for a career in research or academia.
These are typically: manuscript preparation of research findings, reading literature,
manuscript reviewing, attendance and presentation at seminars, organization and attendance
at training related activities (including grantsmanship workshops) and limited training in
teaching related activities. Any assigned teaching responsibilities should not exceed 50% of
the postdoctoral scholar’s time or more than 2 courses over a 12 month period. All of these
activities should have the objective of enhancing the performance of the postdoctoral scholar
in the pursuit of research related projects from which they may draw support. In many cases
the training component of a postdoctoral appointment may involve the joint preparation and
development of proposals for extramural funding.

Postdoctoral Scholar – Clinical (job code 9194)
An individual who has either received a doctoral degree (or equivalent) and has come to the
University to gain additional clinical training after completing his/her residency, or are
individuals of greater experience who wish to change clinical specialities. This classification
may also apply to individuals who hold a Doctorate of Medicine and are enrolled in
programs at affiliated hospitals and institutes for the purpose of obtaining additional clinical
training before embarking on independent careers as physicians. Any assigned teaching
responsibilities should not exceed 50% of the postdoctoral scholar’s time or more than 2
courses over a 12 month period.

Postdoctoral Scholar – Instructional (job code 9195)
An individual who has received a doctoral degree (or equivalent) and is engaged in a defined
period of mentored instructional assignments to enhance the professional skills needed to
pursue his or her chosen career path. This training includes all relevant scholarly activities
related to the preparation for a career in teaching. The training component of an instructional
postdoctoral appointment should involve participation in departmental activities such as
teaching seminars, course development, instructional laboratory design, and teacher training
workshops. These activities should have the objective of enhancing the performance of the
postdoctoral scholar in the pursuit of teaching-related career goals. Postdoctoral Scholars -
Instructional are expected to teach 3 classes in the Fall semester, 3 classes in the Spring
semester, and 2 classes in the Summer semester each year of employment, as well as attend
training and professional development workshops, many of which are offered through the Center for 21st Century Teaching Excellence.

**Job Codes and Salary Plans**

The USF System utilizes two distinct methods to differentiate postdoctoral appointments – job codes and salary plans. The job codes are 9180 (Postdoctoral Scholar – Research), 9194 (Postdoctoral Scholar – Clinical), and 9195 (Postdoctoral Scholar – Instructional). Description of these three position types can be found in the previous section.

The other classification distinction for these positions is the Salary Plan, which indicates the funding source from which the postdoctoral scholar is paid. The plan 08 indicates state funds (E&G or Auxiliary accounts), research grants, fellowships, or training grants. **The salary plan of 96 indicates the individual is not paid through the USF Payroll system, and is therefore not considered to be an employee and not eligible for benefits.** This would apply to postdocs who are paid directly from external funds, such as those being sponsored by a country or corporation. The following job code and salary plan combinations are to be used according to the postdoctoral scholar’s job duties and funding source:

a) 9180-08 (Postdoctoral Scholar – Research) - those funded through E&G, auxiliary, and research grants. These individuals are considered USF employees.

b) 9194-08 (Postdoctoral Scholar – Clinical) - those receiving a fellowship or are paid through a training grant. These individuals are considered USF employees.

c) 9195-08 (Postdoctoral Scholar – Instructional) - those funded through E&G, auxiliary, and research grants. These individuals are considered USF employees.

d) 9180-96 (Postdoctoral Scholar – Research) – those not paid through USF payroll and therefore are not considered to be USF employees and not eligible for USF benefits.

e) 9194-96 (Postdoctoral Scholar – Clinical) those not paid through USF payroll and therefore are not considered to be USF employees and not eligible for USF benefits.

f) 9195-96 (Postdoctoral Scholar – Instructional) – those not paid through USF payroll and therefore are not considered to be USF employees and not eligible for USF benefits.

**NOTE:** Postdoctoral scholars may not be “self-funded.” The salary must come from USF or from clearly documented external sources, not from the postdoctoral scholar’s personal funds or savings.

**Appointment Criteria**

Appointment as a postdoctoral scholar requires a doctoral-level degree or the foreign equivalent. Candidates with non-US degrees will be required to provide proof of degree equivalency. A candidate may be offered a postdoctoral position if the candidate has completed all of the requirements for a degree before the degree has been formally conferred. However, the degree must be conferred prior to the first day of employment. Proof of the degree must be submitted to the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs on or before the first day of employment. The candidate must also
Terms of Service

1. Postdoctoral scholar appointments are time-limited and have fixed end dates. Appointments are for one year (12 months) and may be renewed in yearly increments depending on satisfactory performance and availability of funding. Departments may require a minimum duration of appointment (e.g., one year). NOTE: The initial appointment for a postdoctoral scholar must be at least 12 months (one academic year) in order to allow for benefits eligibility.

2. The total duration of service for a Postdoctoral Scholar – Research (9180) or Postdoctoral Scholar – Clinical (9194) may not exceed three years. By exception, the College Dean may grant an extension of no more than two additional years.
   a. Grandfathering of Term Limit: Postdoctoral Scholars – Research (9180) or Postdoctoral Scholars – Clinical (9194) who were appointed prior to the July 1, 2010 implementation date of this practice will, subject to the annual renewal of such appointment, have a term limit of two more years (i.e., through June 30, 2012) or a term total of three years (or up to five years with College Dean approval), whichever is greater, before the conclusion of their standing as a postdoctoral scholar.
   b. Following the allotted service period, the Postdoctoral Scholar – Research (9180) or Postdoctoral Scholar – Clinical (9194) must either be moved into a non-training position (applicable faculty lines, research associate, assistant in research, associate in research, etc.) or terminated. It is within the University’s sole discretion not to reappoint a postdoctoral scholar.

3. The total duration of service for a Postdoctoral Scholar – Instructional (9195) may not exceed two years. By exception, the College Dean may grant an extension of no more than one additional year.
   a. Grandfathering of Term Limit: Postdoctoral Scholars – Instructional (9195) who were appointed prior to the July 1, 2010 implementation date of this practice will, subject to the annual renewal of such appointment, have a term limit of one more year (i.e., through June 30, 2011) or a term total of two years (or three years with College Dean approval) whichever is greater, before the conclusion of their standing as a postdoctoral scholar.
   b. Following the allotted service period, the Postdoctoral Scholar – Instructional (9195) must either be moved into a non-training position (e.g., applicable faculty lines) or terminated. It is within the University’s sole discretion not to reappoint a postdoctoral scholar.

Salary and Stipends

1. Scale - The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, in conjunction with the USF Provost’s Office, shall establish each year a minimum annual compensation level for all postdoctoral scholars. The minimum annual salary shall be the minimum used at USF. For 2012-13, the minimum salary is set at $38,000. Generally, the postdoctoral scholar’s stipend will
be paid through the USF Payroll Department. If need be, Departments may contact the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs for possible salary exemption procedures associated with certain grants.

2. **Criteria** - Departments are responsible for establishing the criteria for determining the salaries of individual postdoctoral scholars if more than the University established minimum is desired. Such criteria may include, but are not limited to, the individual’s qualifications, number of years of experience, performance as a postdoctoral scholar, funding availability in the discipline, and competitive salaries and stipends paid by other universities. When a stipend or salary is established for a postdoctoral scholar, equity among all postdoctoral scholars within the unit shall be taken into consideration.

3. **Provision of Minimum Pay Level** - When extramural agencies establish stipends at a rate less than the University established salary and stipend scale minimum, and the University elects to proceed with such an appointment, the department is required to provide additional funding to bring the pay level of the postdoctoral scholar up to the University established minimum. The mentor is required to arrange the additional funding prior to the start date of the appointment.

4. **Annual Salary Increases** - The mentor may determine additional stipend increases for postdoctoral scholars each year, contingent upon the terms of the funding agency. Annual stipend increases will not automatically be based on yearly performance evaluations; however, mentors will be expected to provide a written performance evaluation on a yearly basis as part of their mentoring duties. Salary and stipend increases are to be recommended and approved in accordance with USF Human Resources procedures.

5. **Funding Source** - Postdoctoral scholars may not be “self-funded.” Funding for salary must come from USF or from clearly documented external sources, not from the postdoctoral scholar’s personal funds or savings.

**Appointment Percentage**

1. Appointments to the postdoctoral scholar title are typically full-time (40 hours per week), based on the expectation that the postdoctoral scholar will be fully involved in scholarly pursuits. In special cases, an exception may be granted when the appointee is unable to make a full-time commitment for reasons of health, family responsibilities, or employment external to the USF System. Such a request must take into account extramural funding agency requirements, if any. When a reduced-time appointment has been approved, the mentor and postdoctoral scholar shall sign a written agreement specifying the reduction in hours of work and concomitant responsibilities. **NOTE:** Benefits are based on an employee’s percentage of full-time employment (FTE). A change in FTE will result in a change to employee’s benefits.

2. When a postdoctoral scholar holds more than one University appointment or position, the percent time of the postdoctoral scholar appointment normally will be reduced so that the sum of the percent times of the two appointments equals 100%. 

8
Notice of Appointment – Offer Letters

All new postdoctoral appointments are to be made in writing by a letter from the Department Chair or the appropriate Dean/designee. The departments/responsible units should use the standard postdoctoral appointment letter templates, which are available from the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs in the Graduate School (www.grad.usf.edu/postdoc). Generally, the appointment letter should be sent out two to three months prior to the start date of the appointment.

The offer letter should include:

- Offer of a Postdoctoral Scholar-Research (9180), Postdoctoral Scholar-Clinical (9194), or Postdoctoral Scholar-Instructional (9185) position,
- Salary Plan of 08 or 96,
- Appointment schedule and number of hours per week,
- The duties and responsibilities of the postdoctoral scholar,
- Supervisor name and contact information,
- A statement of teaching responsibilities, if any, associated with the appointment,
- The period of the appointment, with start and end dates,
- The number of years this appointment may continue, and a statement that support beyond the initial year is contingent upon satisfactory performance and availability of funding,
- The salary/stipend level, both annually and biweekly (if applicable),
- Statement of eligibility for health insurance and other benefits (if applicable),
- (International candidates) Notification of visa and employment documentation requirements. If the postdoctoral scholar will require a visa to enter the US, the department will need to complete a USF J-1 Scholar Request Form at least 2-3 months prior to the expected start date. The form is located at http://global.usf.edu/isss/sch-forms.php,
- The web address of the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (www.grad.usf.edu/postdoc) where this and other information relevant to postdocs can be found,
- Information on attending a Right Start orientation meeting on or before the first day of employment, if applicable,
- Request for proof of doctoral degree (i.e. official university transcripts or diploma copy),
- Request for candidate's signature and return of letter by given date.

The postdoctoral appointee must acknowledge the terms of the appointment by signing the letter of appointment and returning it to the address indicated in the letter within 10 days of the date on the letter.
**Annual Reviews and Individual Development Plans**

As part of an ongoing performance management system supporting the success of the University’s employees, it is expected that postdoctoral scholars undergo a review of their performance on an annual basis. A written evaluation should be prepared and delivered to each postdoctoral scholar by the responsible administrator or supervisor. Criteria for such reviews will vary according to the nature of the position and the unit in which it is located. Goals and objectives, as well as the criteria for annual reviews, should be communicated to the postdoctoral employee at the time of initial hire and at the start of each succeeding year. Training and professional development workshops attended must be documented within the annual review. Sample Annual Review forms are available from the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, [www.grad.usf.edu/postdoc](http://www.grad.usf.edu/postdoc).

The responsible administrator should seek whatever evaluations are necessary to complete a fair and thorough review. Evaluations might be sought from colleagues and from others with whom the postdoctoral scholar interacts.

It is also strongly advised that faculty mentors have their postdoctoral scholars complete an Individual Development Plan (IDP) that can be used to outline goals, gauge progress, and can be useful for annual reviews. Sample IDP forms are available from the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, [www.grad.usf.edu/postdoc](http://www.grad.usf.edu/postdoc).

**Corrective Action, Termination, and Resignation Policies**

The University may impose corrective action or dismissal when the postdoctoral scholar’s performance or conduct merits the action. Corrective action could be in the form of a verbal reprimand, written reprimand, suspension, or termination.

**Notice of termination:** If a postdoctoral appointment is terminated by the faculty mentor prior to the end of the appointment, the postdoctoral scholar should be notified in writing at least two weeks in advance. The exception is for appointees who are terminated due to poor performance. In all cases, the Office for Postdoctoral Affairs should be notified as soon as possible.

**Notice of resignation:** If a postdoctoral scholar resigns prior to the end of the appointment, he or she should provide a written two-week notice. Postdoctoral appointees must leave all research and instructional materials with the faculty supervisor to ensure continuation of the project or teaching assignment and compliance with relevant University and sponsor policies. However, at the discretion of the College/Department, access to these data and materials may be provided to the appointee.

**Diversity and EEO**

The University of South Florida System endeavors to make academic excellence inclusive by sustaining a community of free inquiry in which men and women of diverse race, ethnicity, veteran status, marital status, socio-economic level, national origin, religious belief, physical ability, sexual orientation, age, class, political ideology and lifestyle participate in, contribute to, and benefit equally, from the academic community. A diverse campus environment, in which differences are respected and appreciated, promotes more effective teaching and learning. Consequently, the University is committed to maintaining a diverse student body at the undergraduate and graduate
levels, as well as perpetuating initiatives that enhance the diversity of the campus climate, curriculum, student body, faculty, postdoctoral scholars, staff, and administration.

**Grievance Policy**

The University of South Florida System encourages open communication between employees and management to address concerns. Therefore, the University is committed to resolving employee concerns through informal resolution whenever possible. However, if this should prove to be impossible, postdoctoral scholars, as non-permanent employees, can file grievances under University Rule 6C4-10.213 and Policy 0-007. Postdoctoral scholars may only file a grievance for non-disciplinary matters if they believe they have been directly affected by an act or omission of the University in applying any Rules. They may not grieve any action beyond the informal resolution process. A grievance must be filed in writing using the designated USF Grievance Form, which must be signed and dated by the grievant and submitted to the Division of Human Resources within 30 days after the date he/she becomes aware of the incident, act, or omission that is the basis for the grievance. By filing a grievance, the grievant agrees to participate in a mandatory 30-day informal resolution process, to be conducted in accordance with University guidelines, beginning with the date the grievance is filed in Human Resources. Complete information concerning the grievance process can be found at [http://usfweb2.usf.edu/human-resources/employee-relations](http://usfweb2.usf.edu/human-resources/employee-relations).

**International Postdoctoral Scholars**

The International Services Office at USF is the main administrative and immigration advising office for international students, research associates, and postdoctoral scholars from over 130 countries. The mission of International Services is to promote awareness, understanding and compliance of federal immigration regulations and university policies while supporting and enhancing the academic, cultural, and social experiences of all international students, postdoctoral scholars, and staff at the University of South Florida.

The International Services Office strives to:

- Advise international students, postdoctoral scholars, and staff regarding immigration compliance, visa status maintenance, and acculturation issues.
- Offer workshops on employment, career planning, cultural adjustment, and other topics.
- Develop, plan, conduct, and implement orientation programs for new students and scholars.
- Collaborate with other USF departments to increase the level of understanding regarding immigration issues and the role of International Services.
- Promote cross cultural understanding by working with USF departments and other on-campus organizations to plan events and inform students and scholars about upcoming activities, via listserv, email, and the International Services website.

USF recommends the use of the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program for postdoctoral scholars who will require a Visa to enter the US or remain in the United States. Departmental exceptions to this
recommendation should be directed to the Director of International Services office at http://global.usf.edu/isss/ or 813-974-5102.

International postdoctoral scholars on the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program are considered to be “Research Scholars” which is defined as: An individual primarily conducting research, observing, or consulting in connection with a research project at USF from 3 weeks to 5 years in duration. The J-1 cannot be used for a USF tenure track position.

The hiring department must complete the Scholar Request form located at http://global.usf.edu/isss/sch-forms.php for USF to produce the visa documentation needed to enter the US. Departments should request period of stay on this form for the same period covered in the scholar’s letter of appointment, offer letter, or letter of support. **Request forms should be submitted at least three and ideally six months prior to the individual’s anticipated start date at USF** to ensure that the exchange visitor will have adequate time to apply for the visa and arrange travel. The spouse and dependent children (unmarried and under 21 years of age) may apply for J-2 dependent visas to accompany the J-1 scholar.

During the hiring process, incoming foreign national scholars need to be advised that the **Local Social Security Office will not see any newly-arrived F-1 or J-1 visa holders until 10 days following the person's entry into the U.S. as noted on their I-94 form.** For postdoctoral scholars, this will impact start dates. International Services (IS) informs incoming scholars that they should plan to arrive in the United States ten (10) days prior to the start date on the DS-2019 if possible. Otherwise, departments will need to make hire date changes once the scholar arrives based on when they can visit the Social Security office. **This information should be contained in the offer letter.** Please contact the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs if you have any questions on the wording.

The department should arrange for office space, access to office equipment (i.e., computer, phone, etc), and a USF email address as deemed appropriate to the proposed activity. Since there is currently no USF housing for exchange visitors, the International Services office refers all requests for accommodation to USF’s Off-Campus Housing Office. Their website at http://sra.usf.edu/och/ includes a searchable listing of short term and long term accommodations. The hiring department agrees to assist the International Services office with the collection of immigration documentation and proof of health insurance as required by law and to contact International Services prior to completion of employment.

International postdoctoral scholars should contact the International Services office for questions concerning their status, immigration compliance, visa status maintenance, acculturation issues, documents, etc. For more information, please refer to global.usf.edu/isss/.

**Please Note:** Postdoctoral scholar positions are time-limited positions and thus, do not meet the petition requirements for US permanent residency based on employment. International postdoctoral scholars should contact the International Services office for questions concerning their status, immigration compliance, visa status maintenance, acculturation issues, documents, etc. For more information, please refer to global.usf.edu/isss/.
**Health Insurance Requirement**

All USF postdoctoral scholars (international and domestic) and their eligible family members are able to participate in the USF postdoctoral scholar health insurance program beginning on their date of hire. US immigration regulations require J scholars and their dependents to carry specific health insurance during their period of stay in the US. The USF postdoctoral scholar health insurance program satisfies all US immigration requirements for health insurance. As of September 2011, United HealthCare provides the medical insurance. USF contributes 80% of the premium for the employee and 50% of the premiums for the spouse or domestic partner and dependent children. For questions regarding medical insurance coverage, how the plan works, how to file a claim, etc., contact the USF Human Resources Office at 813-974-2970. Premiums are based on an employee’s percentage of full-time employment (FTE). A change in FTE will result in a change to employee’s premium amount. Employee contributions are paid via payroll deduction.

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**GRANTS & RESEARCH ENDEAVORS**

USF System postdoctoral scholars are encouraged to participate in grant funding opportunities as part of their learning experience. To facilitate this, the Office of Research & Innovation (ORI) is available to assist with all aspects of the award procedure. ORI coordinates and facilitates institutional research initiatives, and provides support for university-wide research programs and infrastructure development. The Office of Research & Innovation provides administrative direction and oversight of research policies and procedures, assurances, budgetary matters, and central services for its divisions. Please refer to their website at [www.research.usf.edu](http://www.research.usf.edu) for additional information.

**NOTE:** USF Postdoctoral Scholars are not eligible to serve as the Principal Investigator (PI) on a sponsored funded research project. However, they are eligible to serve as a Co-PI on a research project. An exception to this rule is if the award is a postdoctoral research training grant or a similar type of award which requires the postdoc be the Principal Investigator. Please contact Sponsored Research at [http://www.research.usf.edu/sr/](http://www.research.usf.edu/sr/) for more details.

**Sponsored Research**

The Division of Sponsored Research ([www.research.usf.edu/sr/](http://www.research.usf.edu/sr/)) was created to assist researchers with funding searches and proposal development, as well as provide training programs to support and increase participation in research and creative activities. DSR submits proposals to sponsors, negotiates the process, and accepts the awards on behalf of USF. They serve as a liaison to the sponsors regarding extensions, change of PI, change of work scope, budget transfers, and revised budgets. Additionally, coordination and management of external and internal contracts and grants, interdisciplinary research programs, and inter- and intra-institutional proposals are also included in their responsibilities.
Research Financial Management
Research Financial Management (usfweb.usf.edu/controller/research/) provides financial services in support of USF sponsored research awards and activities. Their mission is to protect the University’s research program while maintaining a strategic balance of service and compliance.

Patents and Licensing
To facilitate the patenting and licensing of inventions developed under University auspices, USF has established the Division of Patents & Licensing (www.research.usf.edu/pl/). The primary goals of this office are to facilitate the distribution of research results through commercial development and to generate revenue that will reward inventors for their creativity and support further research and other educational programs at the University.

Research Integrity & Compliance
The mission of the Division of Research Integrity & Compliance (www.research.usf.edu/cs/) is to ensure research performed within the USF System is safe and ethical; to facilitate the conduct of research; to comply with applicable regulations, laws, and institutional polices; and thereby, promote a culture of integrity in research.

Comparative Medicine
Comparative Medicine (www.research.usf.edu/cm/) serves as the advocate for animals involved in research at the University of South Florida, and provides a fully accredited, centralized service of pathogen-free animal procurement, husbandry, health surveillance, and quality control, and is the Tampa Bay regional resource for laboratory animal-related services. Comparative Medicine contributes to a greater understanding of life through studies that define and compare complex living organisms and processes.

NOTE: Responsible Conduct of Research Training Requirement

National Science Foundation (NSF): As part of the 2007 America COMPETES Act, the NSF is requiring that all students and postdoctoral scholars supported on NSF funded projects receive training in the Responsible Conduct of Research (http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/rcr.jsp). For proposals submitted on or after January 4, 2010, institutions must certify that students and postdocs have received such training. This requirement does not affect currently funded research; however, proposals submitted or due on and after January 4, 2010 that fund students and postdocs are affected.

The National Institute of Health (NIH): The NIH now requires participation in and successful completion of instruction in Responsible Conduct of Research by individuals supported by any NIH training/research education/fellowship/career award (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-10-019.html). It is expected that course attendance is monitored and that a certificate or documentation of participation is available upon course completion. NIH does not require certification of compliance or submission of documentation, but expects institutions to maintain records sufficient to demonstrate that NIH-supported trainees, fellows, and scholars have received the required instruction.
**Responsible Conduct of Research Training:** The Office of Research & Innovation along with the Graduate School have partnered with the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) to offer Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training to individuals at USF. CITI provides online training modules and can be accessed at [www.citiprogram.org](http://www.citiprogram.org). Upon completion of the RCR modules, students and postdoctoral scholars will receive a certificate, and records regarding their completion of the training program will be sent to the Division of Research Integrity & Compliance (DRIC) for inclusion in a training database. In addition, the DRIC will offer face-to-face training sessions as required by some funding agencies. Please consult the DRIC website ([www.research.usf.edu/cs/](http://www.research.usf.edu/cs/)) for information on scheduling these sessions.

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**TEACHING**

Although the primary purpose of the postdoctoral scholar experience is to engage in mentored research and/or scholarly training, some postdoctoral scholars may be given teaching assignments as part of their responsibilities, while others may be hired for the express purpose of teaching. This determination will be made by the hiring department and, if the postdoctoral scholar is paid from a grant, must conform to the grant regulations. If teaching is assigned, the faculty mentor is required to assist the postdoctoral scholar in completing a Faculty Activity Report (FAR). This FAR will also be utilized in evaluating the postdoctoral scholar during the annual review process.

Postdoctoral Scholars - Instructional are expected to teach 3 classes in the Fall semester, 3 classes in the Spring semester, and 2 classes in the Summer semester each year of employment, as well as attend training and professional development workshops, many of which are offered through the Center for 21st Century Teaching Excellence. The training and professional development workshops attended must be documented within the annual review.

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**ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES**

Each department or school that designates postdoctoral appointments shall select a Staff member to oversee the appointment procedures and to serve as a resource on postdoctoral policies. This person is expected to provide guidance and support to the postdoctoral scholars in the department and to serve as a link to the University-wide Office for Postdoctoral Affairs. The department or school may provide additional administrative support.
The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) is a USF System office that supplements the role of the departments and schools in implementing policies and procedures related to the appointment, roles, requirements, and responsibilities of all postdoctoral scholars. The mission of the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs is to serve as an administrative and academic center of excellence for postdoctoral scholars across the USF System. The office strives to foster a robust postdoctoral community, provide opportunities to enhance the postdoctoral experience and future success for its constituents, serve as a dedicated resource for postdoctoral scholars, faculty and administrators, and promote the university’s dynamic program of postdoctoral opportunities while supporting postdoctoral scholars throughout their time at USF.

The objectives of the OPA that impact USF’s postdoctoral scholars include: providing administrative support and guidance to USF colleges and postdoctoral scholars throughout the recruitment and hiring process; building collaboration among postdoctoral scholars, colleges, other USF departments, and graduate students; and offering professional development workshops for postdoctoral scholars and their mentors.

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs engages with two groups comprised of faculty, staff, and postdoctoral scholars from many different Colleges and Departments in matters concerning postdoctoral education in the USF System:

**Postdoctoral Scholar Advisory Group (PSAG)** – The PSAG is comprised of faculty, administrators, and postdoctoral scholars from across the USF System. This group advises the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs on all matters related to the postdoctoral experience at USF.

**USF Postdoctoral Scholars Association (USF-PSA)** – The USF-PSA is comprised of four USF postdoctoral scholars serving as an elected executive board and the USF System postdoctoral scholar community. This association seeks to provide resources, information, career development, and representation for all postdoctoral scholars at the University of South Florida. The USF-PSA also strives to create a stronger sense of community through an e-mail listserv, the Internet, and social/networking activities. All USF System postdoctoral scholars who have a current USF appointment are eligible for membership.

More information on the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs can be found at [www.grad.usf.edu/postdocs](http://www.grad.usf.edu/postdocs).
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Questions Related to Appointment as a Postdoctoral Scholar

1. Are postdoctoral positions considered faculty appointments?
   - Postdoctoral scholars are not classified as faculty. This handbook outlines differences between postdoctoral scholars and other employees, but in the absence of a stated difference, temporary employees’ policies and procedures apply.

2. Can a postdoctoral scholar be hired for less than one year?
   - No. The initial appointment for a postdoctoral scholar must be at least 12 months (one academic year) in order to allow for benefits eligibility. Reappointments should be in 12 month increments.

3. What is the correct protocol for hiring a postdoctoral scholar?
   - Departments should go through normal HR channels for hiring postdoctoral positions. The Careers@USF online employment system ought to be used. Each school or department should follow their existing procedure. However, minimum annual salary, length of appointment, and full-time status requirements must be met.

   - Position descriptions for postdoctoral scholars can be found on the HR website under job codes 9180, 9194, and 9195.

Questions Related to Postdoctoral Salary

4. The USF System has adopted a minimum postdoctoral salary, but what if there is still be some disparity among departments?
   - The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, in conjunction with the USF Provost’s Office, shall establish each year a minimum annual compensation level for all postdoctoral scholars. The minimum annual salary shall be the minimum used at USF. For 2012-13, the minimum salary is set at $38,000. Generally, the postdoctoral scholar’s stipend will be paid through the USF Payroll Department.

   - Note that USF is only setting a minimum, not equating salary to years of experience. This salary minimum is to protect those who are on the low end of the scale. However, in some fields it is common to pay postdoctoral scholars according to years of experience. The postdoctoral scholar, PI, and hiring unit are always free to negotiate a salary above the USF System minimum.

5. Are there any exceptions to the postdoctoral minimum salary?
   - Yes. Grant proposals submitted prior to July 1, 2010 will not be subject to the salary minimum until renewal of the grant.
6. What is the procedure if the Grant was submitted prior to the minimum salary guidelines being posted and it cannot support a $38,000 postdoctoral minimum salary?

- Departments may contact the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs for possible salary exemption procedures associated with certain grants.

Questions Related to International Postdocs

7. If I am interested in applying for a postdoctoral position at USF, but I am not a U.S. Citizen or Permanent Resident, would I need to be sponsored to obtain permanent residency?

- US regulations that govern employment based petitions for permanent residency require that the position be a “permanent” position. Since postdoctoral positions are not permanent, they would not qualify for permanent residency sponsorship. Therefore the university recommends the J-1 Research Scholar category, which allows 5 years of participation and the TN NAFTA visa, which is typically issued for 3 years with no maximum on renewals. For more information visit the USF International Affairs webpage at http://global.usf.edu/.

8. I have applied for a postdoc position at USF and need a certified translation for my documents. Are there any services available through the university?

- No. However, the University of South Florida considers evaluation reports from any member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES). Please click here for a list of recommended vendors. (This information is provided only as a possible source.)

9. Do international postdoctoral scholars holding a J-1 Visa have to file taxes?

- Yes. All postdoctoral scholars hired at USF need to file taxes. For more information on the steps to follow, please visit the International Services website at http://global.usf.edu/issss/cur-students.php.

Questions Related to Postdoctoral Benefits

10. Will postdoctoral scholars have a separate orientation?

- The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs hosts an annual postdoctoral orientation in August of each year. However, postdoctoral scholars are encouraged to attend their individual USF department orientations as well.

11. Are postdoctoral scholars eligible for benefits?

- Postdoctoral scholars are eligible for specific benefits as outlined on the HR website - http://usfweb2.usf.edu/human-resources/audience/postdoc.asp. Only
postdoctoral scholars Job Codes of 9180, 9194, and 9195 with a Job Code of 08 (paid through the USF Payroll system) are eligible for these benefits.

12. Are postdoctoral scholars eligible to use the Employee Assistance Program services?

- Yes. When the postdoctoral scholar, a family member, or partner need help dealing with a situation that’s troubling them, they can call 800-327-8705 seven days a week, 24 hours a day, to speak with a trained, caring professional - or they can log into www.MagellanHealth.com/member for a wealth of work/life resources. Services available include qualified child and elder care referrals, adoption information and resources, legal consultation, financial services consultation, family and relationship issues, work/life balance, stress management, health and wellness, grief and loss, depression and anxiety, alcohol or drug concerns, and dealing with conflict or violence. These services are free of charge to all postdoctoral scholars and their spouses, domestic partners, dependents, and others in their household.

13. Where can postdoctoral scholars find a list of approved UnitedHealth Care providers?

- If you wish to look for a specialist, please visit www.uhcsr.com, look up University of South Florida under “School/Association,” and click on “UHC Choice Plus” to look for a specific physician/specialty. United HealthCare recommends calling the doctor’s office beforehand to confirm that they are still part of the network. For additional questions, the UHC phone number for postdoctoral scholar plans is 800-767-0700.

14. Where can I find a list of dental providers?

- Unfortunately, the university has not been provided a way for searching online for dental providers. Please call Florida Combined Life and ask the representative to provide a list of local dentists. The toll free number is 877-325-3979.

15. Are postdoctoral scholars eligible for the USF retirement plan?

- Yes. Postdoctoral scholars participate in USF’s qualified retirement plan for temporary employees (TERP) not covered by the State Retirement System. Employees are immediately vested; all investments are controlled by the participant and are completely portable when they leave the university.

16. Can international postdoctoral scholars contribute to a retirement plan? What happens when they leave the university?

- Yes, international postdoctoral scholars are eligible to participate in the Temporary Employee Retirement Plan (TERP). Participants in this plan do not contribute to the Social Security Administration, nor is the amount contributed by the employee matched by the university. Instead, employees contribute 7.5% of their wages into an investment account in their name. Withdrawals from the plan
may be made at the termination of employment, but note that there is a 10% IRS penalty that will apply if you are younger than 55 years old. For additional information on TERP please visit http://usfweb2.usf.edu/human-resources/benefits/terp.asp.

Questions Related to Postdoctoral Leave

17. Is the monthly accrual of Paid Time Off (PTO) days for postdoctoral scholars tracked on a calendar basis (January-December year, like discretionary days), or by appointment date?

- Postdoctoral scholars receive ten (10) days of PTO per calendar year, with the first year prorated based on hire date. PTO may be used for vacation, sick or personal time off at the discretion of the employee with supervisor approval. PTO may be used in four (4) and eight (8) hour increments only. PTO is not carried over from year to year. Any unused PTO at the end of the calendar year is forfeited. Unused PTO time will not be paid out at the time of separation from employment.

18. For postdoctoral scholars who were here before the PTO procedures went into effect, can departments set their own parameters for grandfathering PTO leave if the postdoctoral scholar’s time had not previously been tracked?

- No. All postdoctoral scholars either hired or changed to job codes 9180, 9194, or 9195 with a Job Code of 08 (paid through the USF Payroll system) will immediately fall under the new leave/benefits policy and will receive a prorated amount based on hire date and policy parameters.

19. What happens if a postdoctoral scholar uses all of his/her PTO leave and requests more?

- If PTO has been exhausted, postdoctoral scholars may request to take time without pay. If approved, a pay exception form must be processed for that month.

20. What happens if a postdoctoral scholar has PTO leave remaining at the end of the calendar year or at the end of their employment with the USF System?

- PTO is not carried over from year to year. Any unused PTO at the end of the calendar year is forfeited. Unused PTO time will not be paid out at the time of separation from employment.

Questions Related to Time Tracking and Hours Worked

21. Are postdoctoral appointments and yearly renewals tracked by appointment date, or does the appointment term begin on August 7th, similar to faculty?

- Postdoctoral appointments should be tracked by the appointment date, as with regular staff appointments.
22. May a postdoctoral appointee work part-time?
   - No. Appointments to the postdoctoral scholar title are full time (40 hours per week), based on the expectation that the postdoctoral scholar will be fully involved in scholarly pursuits. In special cases, upon written request of the appointee and concurrence of the mentor, the Provost may grant an exception when the appointee is unable to make a full-time commitment for reasons of health, family responsibilities, or employment external to the USF System. Such a request must take into account extramural funding agency requirements, if any. When a reduced-time appointment has been approved, the mentor and postdoctoral scholar shall sign a written agreement specifying the reduction in hours of work and concomitant responsibilities. NOTE: Benefits are based on an employee’s percentage of full-time employment (FTE). A change in FTE will result in a change to employee’s benefits.

23. How many hours worked per week meets the definition of a full-time postdoctoral scholar?
   - Postdoctoral scholars must work an average minimum of 40 hours a week. Note that 40 hours is the minimum. Postdoctoral scholars are classified as exempt employees, and therefore are not subject to overtime pay. More than 40 hours a week may be required to complete assigned tasks.

24. May postdoctoral scholars work from home?
   - Flexible work options may be allowed at the discretion of the PI and/or the Department Chair. Flexible work options must be requested and documented in accordance with USF Human Resources regulations.

Questions Related to Reappointment Letters and Evaluations

25. Must I do reappointment letters for postdoctoral scholars in my department?
   - Yes. Written terms of appointment (offer letters) must be renewed at the end of each appointment period and submitted to Human Resources.

26. Do PIs and postdoctoral scholars have to participate in yearly evaluations?
   - Yes. As part of an ongoing performance management system supporting the success of the University’s employees, it is expected that postdoctoral scholars undergo a review of their performance on an annual basis. A written evaluation should be prepared and delivered to each postdoctoral scholar by the responsible administrator. Copies should also be sent to HR and the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. Criteria for such reviews will vary according to the nature of the position and the unit in which it is located. Criteria should be communicated to the postdoctoral employee at the time of initial hire and at the start of each succeeding
year. Training and professional development workshops attended must be
documented within the annual review. Sample Annual Review forms are available
from the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs at www.grad.usf.edu/postdoc.

27. Can postdoctoral scholars file grievances?

- The University of South Florida System encourages open communication
  between employees and management to address concerns. Therefore, the
  University is committed to resolving employee concerns through informal
  resolution whenever possible. However, if this should prove to be impossible,
  postdoctoral scholars, as non-permanent employees, can file grievances under
  University Rule 6C4-10.213 and Policy 0-007. Postdoctoral scholars may only
  file a grievance for non-disciplinary matters if they believe they have been
directly affected by an act or omission of the University in applying any Rules.
  They may not grieve any action beyond the informal resolution process. A
  grievance must be filed in writing using the designated USF Grievance Form,
  which must be signed/dated by the grievant and submitted to the Division of
  Human Resources within 30 days after the date he/she becomes aware of the
  incident, act, or omission that is the basis for the grievance. By filing a grievance,
  the grievant agrees to participate in a mandatory 30-day informal resolution
  process, to be conducted in accordance with University guidelines, beginning with
  the date the grievance is filed in Human Resources. Complete information
  concerning the grievance process can be found at http://usfweb2.usf.edu/human-
  resources/employee-relations.

Questions Related to Grandfathering and Term Limits

28. Can extensions be granted to the term limit?

- The total duration of service for a Postdoctoral Scholar – Research (9180) or
  Postdoctoral Scholar – Clinical (9194) may not exceed three years. By exception,
  the College Dean may grant an extension of no more than two additional years.

- The total duration of service for a Postdoctoral Scholar – Instructional (9195) may
  not exceed two years. By exception, the College Dean may grant an extension of
  no more than one additional year.

29. Are postdoctoral scholars, who were appointed before the Postdoctoral Scholar
Standards and Guidelines went into effect, subject to the term limits?

- Postdoctoral Scholars – Research (9180) or Postdoctoral Scholars – Clinical
  (9194) who were appointed prior to the July 1, 2010 implementation date of
  this practice will, subject to the annual renewal of such appointment, have a
  term limit of two more years (i.e., through June 30, 2012) or a term total of
  three years (or up to five years with College Dean approval), whichever is
  greater, before the conclusion of their standing as a postdoctoral scholar.

- Postdoctoral Scholars – Instructional (9195) who were appointed prior to the
  July 1, 2010 implementation date of this manual will, subject to the annual
renewal of such appointment, have a term limit of one more year (i.e., through June 30, 2011) or a term total of two years (or three years with College Dean approval) whichever is greater, before the conclusion of their standing as a postdoctoral scholar.

- Following the postdoctoral service period, all postdoctoral scholars must either be moved into non-training positions (e.g., applicable faculty lines, research associate, assistant in research, associate in research, etc.) or terminated. It is within the University’s sole discretion not to reappoint a postdoctoral scholar.

**30. Will postdoctoral scholars on visas receive the grandfathered term limit?**

- Immigration rules and regulations take precedence over Postdoctoral Scholar Standards and Guidelines. Postdoctoral scholars holding visas and their department/responsible unit must check with International Services to determine what regulations apply. More information - [global.usf.edu/issss/](global.usf.edu/issss/).

**Questions Related to Grants and Funding**

**31. Can a postdoctoral scholar be listed as the Principal Investigator on a proposal?**

- USF Postdoctoral Scholars are not eligible to serve as the Principal Investigator (PI) on a sponsored funded research project. However, they are eligible to serve as a Co-PI on a research project. The exception is if the award specifies that only a postdoc may serve as a PI, such as on a postdoctoral research grant. Please contact Sponsored Research at [http://www.research.usf.edu/sr/](http://www.research.usf.edu/sr/) for more details.