

Guidelines for Postdoctoral Scholars

At Kennesaw State University (KSU), the postdoctoral research experience emphasizes scholarship and continued research training for individuals who have recently completed a doctoral degree. The postdoctoral scholar conducts research under the general oversight of a faculty mentor in preparation for a career position in academe, industry, government, or the nonprofit sector. Postdoctoral research work provides essential experience and training that may include opportunities to enhance teaching and other professional skills. Postdoctoral scholars who contribute significantly to the formal instructional mission of KSU may be hired, with final approval by the Provost, to positions carrying a title that formally recognizes the joint research and teaching expectations.

Postdoctoral scholars contribute to the academic community by enhancing the research and education programs of the university. They bring expertise, insights and creativity that enrich the research and educational environment for all members of the university community, including graduate and undergraduate students. The university strives to provide a stimulating, positive, and constructive experience for postdoctoral scholars, by emphasizing the shared commitment and responsibility of the institution, the faculty, and the scholar. These guidelines provide important information related to postdoctoral assignments at Kennesaw State University. Additionally, postdoctoral scholars are subject to all other applicable KSU and University System of Georgia (USG) policies and procedures. Exceptions to these procedures are expected to be rare and granted only in cases with strong justification. Requests for exceptions should be submitted to the Director of Postdoctoral Affairs within the Office of Research to be reviewed with Human Resources and Legal Affairs. The Director, Postdoctoral Affairs is responsible for administering the postdoctoral scholar guidelines, periodically reviewing these guidelines as needed and taking active steps to encourage compliance.

Definition:

The definition of postdoctoral scholar used by KSU includes the following criteria:

- The scholar has received a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate (e.g., D.V.M., Sc.D., M.D., PharmD), usually recently, in a field directly related to the scholar's assigned responsibilities; and
- The assigned responsibilities of the scholar are predominantly research and/or scholarship but may combine these responsibilities with significant (no more than 50%) formal instructional responsibilities;
- The assignment is full time, limited term; and
- The assignment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time career in academia, industry, government or the non-profit sector.

KSU has three categories of postdoctoral scholars:

Postdoctoral Researcher – this position is an employee of the university with only research-related responsibilities.

Postdoctoral Fellow – this position is an employee of the university with both research-related and official teaching responsibilities.

Postdoctoral Affiliate – this position is not an employee of the university and can be solely dedicated to research and research-related activities or have both research and official teaching responsibilities. Teaching is only allowed if a component of the funding mechanism that supports the Postdoctoral Affiliate.

(See the summary table below for details.)

Postdoctoral Researcher (research only – Job Code 471X01) and Postdoctoral Fellow (research and teaching – Job Code 471T01) positions are generally funded from KSU- administered grants or contracts and are considered employees of the University, receiving a salary for required services. They are in training as they perform work on a funded project, so they are also considered employees. This enables the University to provide essential services and benefits.

Assignment as a Postdoctoral Fellow (research and teaching) includes a significant set of responsibilities in formal instruction as Instructor of Record. For Postdoctoral Fellows, no more than 50% of the Postdoctoral Fellow's workload may consist of teaching responsibilities as instructor of record.

Postdoctoral Affiliates (Job Code 995X02) are considered as unpaid affiliates of KSU although KSU is the hosting institution. Typically, Postdoctoral Affiliates will receive some form of payment from their home institution or other non-USG external source.

A summary table comparing the details of each appointment type is provided below. In this document, the term "postdoctoral scholar" applies to all categories of scholars.

Procedures for Postdoctoral Assignment:

When a unit is granted a postdoctoral opening, the hiring manager is responsible for ensuring that appropriate procedures are followed, and complete files are established. Please refer to the Postdoctoral Onboarding Procedural Guide ([link](#)) for details.

Expectations:

Postdoctoral scholar

The University has adopted the following set of expectations for postdoctoral scholars:

1. Conscientious discharge of assigned duties.
2. Adherence to ethical standards, which, prior to assuming duties, includes background investigation.
3. Compliance with established laboratory practices and recognized university standards, and timely completion of KSU required lab safety training programs.
4. Open and timely discussion with the mentor regarding research progress, distribution of reagents or materials, or any disclosure of findings or techniques privately or in publications.
5. For postdoctoral research and teaching scholars, active participation in training and assessment activities related to formal instructional responsibilities.
6. Publication of research or scholarship during the period of the appointment, in consultation with the faculty mentor.
7. Collegial conduct toward KSU employees, coworkers, colleagues, and other stakeholders.
8. Compliance with all sponsor, KSU, and USG policies and procedures, including observation of established guidelines for research involving human subjects, biohazards, or animals.
9. Adherence to confidentiality standards, intellectual property requirements, and rigorous attention to all types of security protocol.

Mentor

The postdoctoral scholar must be supervised by a mentor who is a faculty member, (grant PI, lead faculty researcher or appropriately qualified designee) in the unit to which the scholar is assigned. Faculty mentors are responsible for guiding and monitoring the work and advancing the training of postdoctoral scholars. When employment or training begins, faculty mentors must give the postdoctoral scholars a written description of assigned duties and expectations and a description of the training program's goals and objectives. Faculty mentors must regularly and frequently communicate with scholars, provide regular and timely assessments of performance annually using the designated evaluation process designated by Human Resources, and provide career advice and job placement assistance.

Term of Assignment:

5 year maximum: The maximum term of assignment for a postdoctoral scholar is five years. This limit is based on federal guidelines and the tenet that postdoctoral assignments are primarily for training, which has a naturally limited duration. The term of assignment is the total, cumulative assignment as a postdoctoral scholar at KSU and does not include time spent as an undergraduate or graduate student or as a postdoctoral scholar at other institutions. However, strong justification will be required if five years at KSU exceeds ten total years of postdoctoral training.

Defined-term assignments: Postdoctoral researchers and postdoctoral fellows will be assigned under a defined-term with a clearly specified end date. The end date must be clearly stated in the offer letter issued by Human Resources, and separation at that date does not require additional notice. A continuation letter with an updated firm end date is required to continue in a defined-term position beyond the original end date (see Continuation of Defined-term Appointments below).

Evaluation:

Recognizing that postdoctoral scholars are in growth positions and striving for professional advancement, they are entitled to formal evaluations by their faculty mentors and this process is strongly encouraged by the University. In accordance with Kennesaw State University's Performance Management and Progressive Discipline Policy, evaluations must occur at least annually.

For Postdoctoral Fellows who have assigned teaching responsibilities, evaluation of their teaching abilities and performance will be conducted by the relevant Department Chair during the semester of instruction. This evaluation will be considered in addition to the regular annual performance review process.

Continuation of Defined-Term Assignments:

In order for a postdoctoral scholar to continue in a defined-term position beyond the HR-issued offer letter end date, a written continuation offer must be presented to the postdoctoral scholar and the Director, Postdoctoral Affairs with an updated defined end date. The mentor will contact the HR Business Partner for assistance with this process no less than 45 days prior to the original defined end date.

Termination of Assignment:

All postdoctoral scholars are subject to termination without advance notice in cases where ethical or compliance standards have been violated.

In the circumstance that a postdoctoral scholar fails to adhere to the general postdoctoral expectations described above or does not satisfactorily meet the specific duties and responsibilities described in the offer letter, the Mentor will coordinate with Human Resources to document the performance issues through the progressive discipline process, including development of a Performance Management and Progressive Discipline Plan. Ultimately, should the Progressive Discipline process not be successful, then initiation of the termination and off-boarding process will occur if the postdoctoral scholar repeatedly fails to meet the performance and/or conduct expectations.

Termination of a defined-term postdoctoral assignment at an end date that has been clearly defined in the offer letter or a continuation letter does not require further documentation before separation; however, every effort will be made to confirm with the postdoctoral scholar and HR the last date of employment at least forty-five (45) days in advance to facilitate the offboarding process.

If a postdoctoral scholar holds a KSU visa sponsorship, the Office of Global Education must be contacted at least 60 days prior to informing the postdoctoral scholar of separation.

Grievance:

Postdoctoral Researchers and Postdoctoral Fellows are staff employees who may be eligible to grieve certain employment actions through [KSU's Staff Grievance Policy](#).

Compensation :

Effective December 1, 2023, Postdoctoral Researchers and Postdoctoral Fellows must be compensated with a minimum annual salary of no less than the assigned pay grade. The minimum salary of the associated pay grade may change at any given time. It is best practice to budget at least at the 25th percentile of the pay grade. Please refer to the [Salary Structure](#) located on the HR Compensation website.

In some instances, external funding agencies and/or awards provide salary guidance that suggests higher compensation, and, in those cases, Compensation's recommendation follows that guidance, but documentation must be provided to compensation@kennesaw.edu. (e.g., in the biological sciences, the National Institutes of Health publishes guidelines).

Leave:

Postdoctoral Researchers and Postdoctoral Fellows employed in 12-month assignments are eligible for 10 hours per month of paid annual leave and 8 hours per month of sick leave. Due to funding requirements, all annual leave must be utilized during the limited term assignment and will not be paid out after the limited term ends.

Health Insurance:

Postdoctoral Researchers and Postdoctoral Fellows may participate in KSU's Benefit program including employee health insurance, subject to HR policies. See Benefits for further information.

Postdoctoral Affiliates are not KSU employees and are therefore ineligible for KSU's benefit programs.

Retirement Program:

Postdoctoral Researchers and Postdoctoral Fellows have the option of participating either in the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) of Georgia or an Optional Retirement Plan (ORP). Please see Retirement Benefits for additional information.

Other Benefits:

International postdoctoral scholars should refer to the International Student and Scholar Services Office with the Office of Global Education for assistance with questions regarding visa status and related topics.

Check the summary table comparing details of appointment types provided at the end of this policy.

	Postdoctoral Researcher	Postdoctoral Fellow	Postdoctoral Affiliate
BCAT OneUSG Connect Job Code	471X01	471T01	995X02
Description	Employee; research duties only	Employee; includes both research duties and teaching as Instructor of Record	Fellowship or traineeship administered through KSU or Fellowship not administered through KSU
Term of Appointment	5 years maximum	5 years maximum	5 years maximum
Appointment Process Refer to Onboarding Process Guide	HR Recruitment	HR Recruitment	**Hosting Agreement
Compensation	Salary	Salary	Unpaid
Required Minimum	*\$51,600 (100% Effort)	*\$51,600 (100% Effort)	Unpaid
Income Tax Owed	Yes	Yes	N/A
Income Tax Withheld	Yes	Yes	N/A
KSU Talon Card	Required	Required	Required
KSU Parking Eligible	Yes	Yes	Yes
KSU Services	Yes	Yes	Yes
Background Investigation	Required	Required	Required
Right-to-Know Training	Required	Required	Required
Laboratory Safety Training (if applicable)	Required	Required	Required
Retirement Benefits	TRS or ORP (with employer match)	TRS or ORP (with employer match)	N/A
Health Insurance	Employee	Employee	N/A
Annual Leave	10 hours/month	10 hours/month	N/A
Sick Leave	8 hours/month	8 hours/month	N/A

*please refer to the current Salary Structure

**Hosting agreement process must be completed in its entirety and may vary based on sponsor