



Quick Turn-Around List Assessment Survey for Establishment-Based Lists

Submitted to the
National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Statistics
As part of the Postdoc Data Project, Phase 2 (Contract # NSF SRS0653745)

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Executive Summary

- Quality of the lists of establishments
 - Out of the five lists tested in the establishment-based QT-LAS, two lists resulted in significant problems with contact information quality and response rate. Both of these lists contained non-academic institutions.
- Knowledgeable contact
 - The respondents for the establishments in the establishment-based QT-LAS appeared to be knowledgeable about policy and definitional issues related to postdocs at their institution. While overall counts of postdocs were reported, most establishments were unable to provide counts of postdocs by characteristics of interest to the study.
- Postdoc hit rate
 - For a list to be eligible for a postdoc sample frame, at least 50% of the institutions needed to employ or staff postdocs. At least 50% of the establishments on three lists reported employing postdocs.
- Acquiring lists of postdocs
 - One goal of the QT-LAS was to learn if institutions would be able to provide a list of postdocs. The proportion of the institutions who reported employing postdocs who also reported that they would be able to provide a list to NSF/SRS ranged from 45.0% to 76.9%. While these proportions seem reasonable, when taken into the full context of actual number of institutions per list, including the non-respondents, the numbers become quite small.
- Postdoc titles and definitions
 - A broad array of job titles was reported for postdocs. Some of the titles were shared by early career researchers who were not in postdoc positions.
 - The definitional element of whether the position provides training in research, when coupled with the stipulation of a Ph.D. or Ph.D.-equivalent degree, appeared to provide the best demarcation between postdocs and non-postdoc early career researchers. Given this, by asking whether the position provides training in research, we believe we may very well be able to distinguish postdocs from nonpostdocs in otherwise similar research positions.

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Quick Turn-Around List Assessment Survey for Establishment-Based Lists

To better understand how postdoctoral (postdoc) experiences relate to educational and labor force outcomes, NSF/SRS is conducting the Postdoc Data Project (PDP). The PDP is a multi-year project with the overarching objective of determining the need for and the feasibility of gathering in-depth information on postdocs in the U.S. SRS currently collects limited aggregate data on postdocs through the Survey of Graduate Students and Postdoctorates in Science and Engineering (GSS) and the Survey of Doctorate Recipients (SDR), and limited data on intentions to take a postdoc through the Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED). During Phase I of the Postdoc Data Project, which is now completed, NSF/SRS identified several gaps in data about postdocs. NSF/SRS confirmed the need to expand the current coverage of postdocs to include foreign-degreed Ph.D. temporary residents in the U.S. in postdoc positions, professional-degreed Ph.D. equivalent postdocs, and postdocs in nonacademic establishments.

A major part of the activities under Phase 2 of the PDP involve documenting and evaluating available lists that may serve as the basis of a postdoc sample frame or a supplemental frame to the SDR. This activity, known as the “List Assessment Task” is an important part of the larger PDP. The purpose of the List Assessment Task is to evaluate, in a short period of time, the feasibility of using available lists of individuals and potential postdoc employers to compile a single, comprehensive sample frame from which NSF/SRS can eventually collect in-depth data on postdocs. Instead of focusing only on using traditional data management tools in building a comprehensive list and then screening for eligibility at the time of data collection, the PDP utilizes data collection methodology to evaluate contact information and screen for eligibility prior to the study’s main launch. This approach provides valuable information in a cost-effective way to:

- Determine if the list includes establishment that employ postdocs;
- Assess the level of effort it would take to use this list to generate counts of postdocs; and
- Obtain lists of individuals at the establishments in postdoc positions; and
- Determine the quality of a potential list of postdocs from the establishment list.

The instrument was designed to answer a set of research questions guided by direction from NSF/SRS and earlier background research and qualitative explorations on the PDP. Over the course of data collection, additional questions arose, and were added to our exploration. Investigations into these questions are covered in detail in the findings section of this report, and are as follows:

- Knowledgeable contact
 - Were we successful in locating the knowledgeable contact about postdoc-related data?
 - Was the contact knowledgeable responsible for postdoc-related data records?

- Postdoc counts
 - Can we obtain postdoc counts?
- Postdoc titles and definitions
 - How do the elements of the definition of a postdoc match to actual postdoc positions?
 - How do the elements of the definition of a postdoc match to non-postdoc positions (per the institution)?
 - What titles are used to describe postdocs?
- Acquiring lists of postdocs
 - Are we able to obtain a list of postdocs from the institution?
 - If we are not able to obtain a list or postdocs, why not?
 - Can we determine who provides the list?

Methodology

List Acquisition and Sampling

A key goal to surveying establishment-based lists was to identify list sources that would help bridge the gap in SRS data sources for postdocs working in non-academic establishments, foreign-degreed postdocs and postdocs with Ph.D.-equivalent degrees. Lists were identified early in Phase 2 of the PDP¹ and selected for the establishment-based QT-LAS at an SRS Postdoc Advisory Board Group meeting in April of 2007. The lists selected were: (1) the 2006 SEVIS public use database, rolled up at the institutional level; (2) the Labor Condition Applications (LCA) database for 2006; (3) An SRS source list of academic and non-academic employers from 2003; and (4) the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC), U.S. Membership Schools (as concern had arisen at the April Advisory Board meeting about the representation of veterinary medical programs in the GSS. We had hoped to add the H-1B file that we obtained during our visit to the Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) in May, 2007, to the establishment-based lists. This list, however, had enough data problems and unknown properties that we were not comfortable with using it for a list assessment survey and for administrative matching with a comparable year of LCA data². Thus, we elected to use the LCA for the QT-LAS in its place.

The QT-LAS was budgeted and designed to include up to 250 sample members. Some of the lists that we acquired were small enough to not require any sampling. Other lists required sampling, but provided very minimal information to use for stratification. For this reason, we used a simple random sample approach to selecting cases for the list assessment survey. This section provides information about the number of cases and selection approach for each of the lists in the establishment-based QT-LAS.

Public Use SEVIS File

The public use SEVIS file originally was formatted as one record per individual (without identifiers). We rolled up the file to the establishment level, creating one unique record per establishment that hosted one or more persons with a temporary visa. We compared the file to the GSS and removed all establishments that overlapped directly with the GSS, leaving 144 unique academic establishments and 241 unique non-

¹ See PDP Catalog of Lists.

² The data file of H-1B petitioners approved for visas in 2005 shared with SRS and SSG in May of 2007 was an analytic file from a former OIS employee.

academic establishments. We keep all establishments in the list for the QT-LAS. We broke the list into two to permit an assessment of the non-GSS academic-based establishments separate from the non-GSS non-academic establishments.

SRS-Source List

The SRS Source List was a selected list of establishments from the 2003 SDR. The establishment name was provided, as recorded by the respondent (included partial names, abbreviations, etc.), but no other contact information was available. To obtain that information, we submitted the file to Dunn and Bradstreet to collect mailing information and a contact person name—most often available was a high-level management contact, such as the CEO. We took a simple random sample of 257 cases.

Labor Conditions Application List

The “Labor Condition Application” (LCA) list is a database of companies applying for H-1B visas for foreign workers. The list is compiled by the Department of Labor (DOL) as it receives applications from employers. LCA databases, organized by year of the application and application method (eFile, fax) are available through the DOL website. We accessed list for calendar year 2006. There were records for all 50 states and Puerto Rico. In total, there were 384,072 records in the eFile and in the Fax file combined for 2006.

While the LCA databases do not provide a list of employers that have *successfully obtained* the visa for workers (only those that applied), it does provide annual snapshots of the types of companies that applied for such visas and the number of applications they submitted.

The databases contain one record per application, with individual identifiers removed. Information about the company included name and address. More than one record per company existed. We aggregated the list at the employer level and de-duplicated the list based on business name and address. We took a simple random sample of approximately 200 cases.

List of U.S. Members of the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC)

The Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) represents all veterinary medical colleges in the United States and Canada, including in the spring of 2007, nine departments of veterinary science, eight departments of comparative medicine, two animal medical centers, and four international colleges of veterinary medicine. The list is compiled via a membership procedure. Since schools need to receive accreditation from the AAVMC to award DVMs, the database containing the AAVMC members is exhaustive of DVM-awarding American and Canadian Institutions.

The information about the members included only name of the organization and links their websites, requiring individual institutional look-ups for contact person name, address, and email.

A summary of decisions made as they relate to sampling each list is presented in Table 1 on the next page.

Table 1. List Summary

File Name	Description	File Size	Sample Size
SEVIS	Unique Non-Academic Establishments in the SEVIS Exchange Visitor file that were not in the GSS. DECISION: Took all cases.	241	241
	Unique Academic Establishments in the SEVIS Exchange Visitor file that were not in the GSS. DECISION: Took all cases.	144	144
SRS list source	Non-academic establishments in a SRS data source file from 2003. DECISION: Took simple random sample to approx. 250 cases. File had 1,580 records before de-duplication.	872	257
LCA	Unique institutions from the 2006 applications from the public file. DECISION: Took simple random sample to reach 200 cases. File had 384,072 records before de-duplication.	96,128	200
AAVMC	All AAVMC accredited institutions on the AAVMC website in May, 2007. DECISION: Took all cases.	45	45

Questionnaire

The individual-based list assessment questionnaire was designed as a short interview, about 10 minutes in length, aimed at capturing: (1) information to determine the proportion of the list members who were postdocs; (2) data that informs postdoc definitional elements, similar to that collected for individuals; and (3) fundamental details about educational background, self-identification as a postdoc, organizations that the individual may belong to (and thus may be on other lists), and demographic information, including temporary visa status. The questionnaire further included a consent statement with all of the required Paperwork Reduction Act language. Appendix A contains a copy of the questionnaire programming specifications.

Data Collection Methodology

The survey utilized a mixed mode approach, starting with a web-based methodology followed by telephone contacts for nonrespondents. The questionnaire was programmed in Illume software, using industry standards. For all lists, sample members were invited to participate via a letter that provided a basic rationale for the study, the survey URL, a unique password for entering the survey, information about the confidential and voluntary nature of the study, and contact information for technical support. Respondents in the AAVMC list also received an email invitation with similar information to the invitation letter, and AAVMC nonrespondents received up to three email reminder messages, spaced about 3-5 days apart. For all other lists whereby we did not have email addresses, we followed-up with non-responders by a telephone reminder. Interviewers attempted to make contact three times before

leaving a voice message or coding the case out. A second letter was mailed to non-responders after the last telephone call to the institution. Following these contacts, a telephone interview protocol was launched, targeting non-respondents. Telephone interviewing included up to eight attempts to complete an interview with each knowledgeable contact at the participating institution. The data collection for the lists were launched in batches and spanned about eight weeks per list. Overall, data collection took place between the third week of August and the first week of December, 2007. A handful of respondents contacted us in December, after the survey had closed and we conducted the interview with them. No incentives were offered. See Appendix B for copies of the respondent communications.

Results

List Performance in Data Collection

A fundamental question in the list assessment was whether we could reach potential respondents and secure a completed interview, given a moderate-level contact effort (as described in the section above). We found some lists performed better than others. Our initial expectation was that the academic lists would achieve overall higher response rates than non-academic institutions. This expectation was supported, with the highest response rate being from the AAVMC list (60%), followed by SEVIS academic list (43%). Our lowest response rate came from the LCA list (5.5%).

We expected a higher response among the academic lists for two reasons. First, survey cooperation among academic institutions generally is higher than non-academic institutions. Second, research and training are prominent activities at most academic institutions, making them fertile grounds for employing postdocs whereby non-academic institutions have a wider range of goals (not necessarily scientific or research in nature) and have less emphasis on training scientists. We think that the LCA list, which is a list of all organizations that seek to employ workers on H-1B visas, likely contains a much smaller eligible population, as these organizations may or may not be doing research at all, let alone hiring postdocs. Lists with lower eligibility potential may not have opened the contact letter or responded to attempts to be reached by telephone, as these contacts advertised the study to be concerning postdocs and early career researchers. The recruitment materials were required by OMB to mention the study objectives—and potential respondents may very well have been dissuaded from participating in a survey aimed at postdocs or early career researchers if they did not employ these classes of employees. This may account for low levels of response in the face of a reasonably robust nonresponse follow-up methodology—and could explain the vast differences in response rate among lists. Table 2 displays response rate by list source and data collection mode, and by complete and partial surveys.

Table 2: Response Rates by List and Mode

List Source	Type	N	Mode: Web		Mode: Telephone		Total Intervws	Response Rate
			Completed Intervws	Partial Intervws	Completed Intervws	Partial Intervws		
AAVMC	Academic	45	18	4	5	0	27	60.0%
SEVIS	Academic	144	40	7	15	0	62	43.1%
SEVIS	Non-Acad.	241	30	5	24	3	62	25.7%
SRS Source	Non-Acad.	257	13	7	4	1	25	9.7%
LCA	Non-Acad.	200	2	2	7	0	11	5.5%

Both the SRS source list of non-academic establishments and the LCA list performed poorly – achieving less than a 10% response rate using the same methodology as the SEVIS lists and AAVMC lists. Two factors may have influenced the response pattern. First, the contact information may have been outdated for a proportion of organizations. For the LCA list, 36% (n=72/200) of the list had returned letters and/or non-functioning telephone numbers. For the SRS source list, 23% (n=59/257) of the list had returned letters and/or non-functioning telephone numbers. Second, there was a lack of specific contact person name or appropriate contact for these lists. For the LCA list, there was not a specific contact person – nor name – to which to mail or call, just a job function. We attempted contact with the “Human Resources Manager”, an appropriate job function to help us with postdoc-related data, but we did not have a name of a person. Survey invitations are less likely to be acknowledged when they are not directed to a person’s name. For the SRS Source, we were able to obtain names of individuals from Dunn and Bradstreet (D&B), but Human Resources personnel were named in D&B for a very small proportion of cases (12%; n=30/257). Most of the named contacts for the SRS source list were at the top level of the organizations. Individuals in these roles are less likely to respond to survey requests. Third, there was a lower probability that the organizations on the lists employ postdocs. The lack of relevance of the study to the organizations may have deterred response.

At a very fundamental level, we would not recommend the SRS Source List and the LCA, given the lack of contact information, lack of contact person, and poor response performance using both web and telephone contacts. Due to low response and very small sample sizes, we have excluded these lists from further reporting on survey findings. The cell counts were simply too small.

The overall length of the survey, by list, is reported in the Table 3 below.

Table 3: Survey Length by List

List Source	Type	N	Average Survey Length in Minutes
AAVMC	Academic	27	11.0
SEVIS	Academic	62	10.0
SEVIS	Non-Academic	61	14.0

Finding a Knowledgeable Contact about Postdoc-Related Data

One of the key challenges to working with institutions about postdoc-related data is finding a knowledgeable contact. Prior qualitative work on the PDP revealed that establishments may have more than one knowledgeable contact about postdoc-related data: one person who can provide definitional and policy-related data, and one who could extract counts of postdocs. The following sections report on the issues surrounding reaching the most knowledgeable contact at sampled institutions.

The initial question of the survey asks whether the institution employs postdocs: “*Your institution has been identified as having important information for our study. Do you have postdocs working at [INSTITUTION NAME]?*” A don’t know response would immediately indicate that the respondent is not very knowledgeable about postdoc records at that institution. For the AAVMC and the SEVIS non-academic list, the respondent seemed knowledgeable from this basic personnel standpoint; for the SEVIS academic list, the respondent appeared less knowledgeable.

Table 4. Average Number of “Don’t Know” and Missing Responses to A1 per List

List Source	Type	N	Don’t Know	Missing	Total
AAVMC	Academic	27	0% n=0	0% n=0	0% n=0
SEVIS	Non-Academic	62	0% N=	3.23% n=2	3.23% n=2
SEVIS	Academic	62	3.23% n=2	4.84% n=3	8.07% n=5

Next, we asked respondents at establishments that employed postdocs if their office was responsible for maintaining postdoc records: *“Next, we would like to learn more about the postdocs at {institution name}. Is your office/department responsible for MAINTAINING RECORDS about postdocs?”* The majority of respondents for institutions in the SEVIS non-academic list were in departments that maintained postdoc records (53.7%, n=29/54) while the reverse was true for the other two lists, whereby the number of “no” responses and missing responses outnumbered the “yes” responses. This finding is consistent with prior PDP qualitative work: we have found through the site explorations and focus groups that the knowledgeable contact about postdoc-related data in academic institutions is more broadly defined than in non-academic institutions. Table 5 below provides the counts by list.

Table 5. Number of Institutions that Maintain Postdoc Records

List Source	Type	N	Yes	No	Missing
AAVMC	Academic	100% n=23	21.7% n=5	65.2% n=15	13.3% n=3
SEVIS	Non-Academic	100% n=54	53.7% n=29	18.5% n=10	27.8% n=15
SEVIS	Academic	100% n=55	14.5% n=8	32.7% n=18	52.7% n=29

We also looked at the level of “don’t know” and item-missing responses on the postdoc definitional elements and the postdoc count questions. Overall, we found the respondent for the AAVMC and the SEVIS non-academic list to be reasonably knowledgeable about postdoc requirements. The respondents for the SEVIS academic lists were less informed, as six out of nine questions had more than 10% of cases recorded as don’t know or missing.

Table 6. Number of “Don’t Know” and Missing Responses to Postdoc Definitional Questions per List

List Source	Type	N	A5a	A5j	A5b	A5c	A5d	A5f	A5g	A5h	A5i
AAVMC	Academic	20	0	n=2 10%	n=1 5%	n=3 15%	n=6 30%	0	n=1 5%	n=2 10%	0
SEVIS	Academic	28	n=3 10.7%	n=2 7.1%	n=2 7.1%	n=12 42.8%	n=6 21.5%	n=5 17.9%	n=4 14.2%	n=2 7.1%	n=3 10.7%
SEVIS	Non-Academic	39	0	0	0	n=10 25.6%	n=4 10.3%	n=2 5.2%	n=2 5.2%	n=1 2.6%	n=1 2.6%

One goal of the QT-LAS was to learn if institutions would be able to provide a list of postdocs. The proportion of the institutions who reported employing postdocs who also reported that they would be able to provide a list to NSF/SRS ranged from 45.0% to 76.9%. While these proportions seem reasonable, when taken into the full context of actual number of institutions per list, including the non-respondents, the numbers become quite small.

Table 7. Number of Respondents who Would Provide a List of Postdocs

List Source	Type	N	Could Provide List	
			%	n
AAVMC	Academic	20	45.0%	9
SEVIS	Academic	26	61.5%	16
SEVIS	Non-Academic	39	76.9%	30

Postdoc Hit Rates

For a list to be eligible for a postdoc sample frame, at least 50% of the institutions needed to employ or staff postdocs. All lists reached that threshold based on the number of responses to the question in the survey. Taking into account the full list, including nonrespondents, however, we can only be certain that the SEVIS non-academic list reached the 50% threshold.

Table 8. Establishments Employing Postdocs

List Source	Type	N	Have Postdocs	
			%	n
AAVMC	Academic	20	100%	20
SEVIS	Academic	28	100%	28
SEVIS	Non-Academic	39	100%	39

Postdoc Counts

The survey included a battery of questions directed at finding counts of postdocs in various categories at the establishments—including funding source, type of funding, sex, race, and foreign-degree status. For all questions, only one or two institutions in the AAVMC list could provide the information. We believe that this is a result of not making contact with the knowledgeable person for postdoc count data. In the administrative data reviews between the AAVMC list and the GSS, we found that the respondent for the GSS veterinary schools was almost always someone at the graduate school, versus the veterinary school, as in our list. The lack of reporting of postdoc counts in the establishment-based QT-LAS and the availability of such data in the GSS may suggest that the graduate school has better access to the data. However, when we asked the QT-LAS respondent to report who would be knowledgeable, they reported Human Resources department.

In the sections below, we provide information on postdoc counts by category for the SEVIS lists. We caution that the response cases are very small, and we do not feel that much can be generalized from these tables. The lesson that we take away from these questions in combination with the definitional and policy questions is that the respondent could report on definitional and policy related issues, but could not provide count information. This split in reporting is consistent with the qualitative work conducted earlier in the study.

Starting with the question about funding source, respondents were asked to provide the number of postdocs by federal and non-federal sources of support. A small proportion of SEVIS-academic (16.1%, n=10) and SEVIS-non-academic (19.4%, n=12) could provide counts of postdocs by funding type and only one of the AAVMC establishments provided counts by funding type.

Table 9. Average Number of Postdocs by Funding Source

List Source	Type	N	Average No. of Postdocs	
			Federal Support	Non-Federal Support
AAVMC	Academic	20	*	*
SEVIS	Academic	28	12.50 (n=10)	11.10 (n=10)
SEVIS	Non-Academic	39	39.25 (n=12)	28.27 (n=12)

**number of responses too small to provide average count*

Respondents who reported postdocs supported by fellowships, traineeships, or research grants were asked to report the number of postdocs in each of these positions. The majority institutions, across lists, were unable to provide a response.

Respondents were asked to report the number of postdocs who were male and female. We found a greater proportion of institutions, across lists, were able to provide a response, as compared to type of support discussed above; however, at least 25% of each list had missing information. We see the same pattern for degree type (i.e., PhD and professional degrees) and degree origination (i.e., U.S. degree and foreign degrees).

Postdoc Titles and Definitions

A formidable challenge to NSF/SRS's ability to expand postdoc survey coverage is determining and using a postdoc definition that produces reliable and accurate postdoc data across sectors.

Across all lists, we observed a total of 67 unique titles for postdocs, many of which were mentioned only once. The most frequently mentioned titles were: "Postdoctoral Fellow", "Postdoctoral Associate", "Postdoc", and "Research Associate". The particular distribution of individual titles used may be less important than some of the patterns visible. For example, across all lists, many of the titles reported use the word "Postdoctoral" (31.3%, n=21), suggesting a clear signal of their appropriateness for postdoctoral scholars. Other titles use the word research but less obviously distinguish between postdocs and other research positions (23.9%, n=16). These include titles such as "Research Associate." Finally, the use of the term "Visiting" to designate postdocs ("Visiting Fellow", "Visiting Scholar"), perhaps because of postdocs' temporary status appeared in five different titles reported. The findings reflect prior research that shows heterogeneity of titles associated with postdocs. The potential to exclude potential postdocs based on job title, or to include non-postdocs is evident and points to the importance of finding a respondent who is knowledgeable about these codes will be critical.

Respondents who reported having postdocs at their institution were asked a series of questions about the characteristics of those postdocs. Consistent with previous findings, there was broad agreement among respondents about a number of these definitional components, although no item received universal support and several items received only mixed support.

The items that received broad support (more than 85% of respondents) were:

- The position is primarily for training in research (85.2%, n=92);
- The individual must have a Ph.D. or equivalent degree (94.5%³, n=104);
- The position is for a defined period of time (85.5%, n=94);
- The individual works under a senior scholar (87.7%, n=93);
- The position is temporary (86.1%, n=93), and
- The individual is mentored (94.4%, n=101).

Moderate support was received for the idea that the individual is expected to publish (73.6%, n=78) and that the individual must have received his doctoral degree recently (45.4%, n=49).

While the generally high support received for the proposed definitional components might be encouraging, it is useful to compare these responses to those provided by establishments who reported having no postdocs. These establishments were asked whether they employed researchers with Ph.D.s or Ph.D.-equivalent degrees who met a number of criteria. Generally, these establishments also reported broad support for the definitional components about which they were asked: 70.2% (n=40) reported employing recent Ph.D.s, 54.5% (n=30) reported that some researchers in this group held temporary appointments and 53.6% (n=30) reported having some researchers with Ph.D.s appointed for a defined period of time. This particular subset of questions, then, may not provide good distinction between the postdoc and non-postdoc groups. By contrast, only 17.5% (n=10) of these respondents reported having

³ This is the percent of respondents who answered "Yes" to either the question about a Ph.D. being required for postdocs (A5B) or an equivalent degree being required if a Ph.D. is not (A5C). The reason these items were combined is that we believe some respondents answered "No" to A5C because they had already answered "Yes" to A5B – equivalent degrees are not required because Ph.D.s are.

Ph.D.s with positions that provide training in research, significantly less than the aforementioned 85.2% of establishments with postdocs who reported that postdoc positions were primarily for training in research. Thus, among the items that were asked of both groups, the question of whether the position provides training in research, when coupled with the stipulation of a Ph.D. or Ph.D.-equivalent degree, appears to provide the best demarcation between the groups. Given this, by asking whether the position provides training in research, we believe we may very well be able to distinguish postdocs from nonpostdocs in otherwise similar research positions.

Summary

Out of the five lists tested in the establishment-based QT-LAS, two lists resulted in significant problems with contact information quality and response rate. Both of these lists contained non-academic institutions.

The respondents for the establishments in the establishment-based QT-LAS appeared to be knowledgeable about policy and definitional issues related to postdocs at their institution. While overall counts of postdocs were reported, most establishments were unable to provide counts of postdocs by characteristics of interest to the study.

For a list to be eligible for a postdoc sample frame, at least 50% of the institutions needed to employ or staff postdocs. At least 50% of the establishments on three lists reported employing postdocs.

One goal of the QT-LAS was to learn if institutions would be able to provide a list of postdocs. The proportion of the institutions who reported employing postdocs who also reported that they would be able to provide a list to NSF/SRS ranged from 45.0% to 76.9%. While these proportions seem reasonable, when taken into the full context of actual number of institutions per list, including the non-respondents, the numbers become quite small.

A broad array of job titles was reported for postdocs – some overlapping with job titles for early career researchers who were not postdocs. The definitional element of whether the position provides training in research, when coupled with the stipulation of a Ph.D. or Ph.D.-equivalent degree, appeared to provide the best demarcation between postdocs and non-postdoc early career researchers. Given this, by asking whether the position provides training in research, we believe we may very well be able to distinguish postdocs from nonpostdocs in otherwise similar research positions.

Appendix A: Programming specifications for the questionnaire

Appendix B: Respondent communications