

Postdoc Definitions Research: Summary of Findings

| Definitional Element | NAS | NSF/ NIH 2007 | GSS | SED 2008 | SDR 2006 | AAU | NPA | Sigma Xi | AAMC | FASEB | UCSF |
|------------------------------|------|---------------|------|----------|----------|------|------|----------|------|-------|------|
| PhD /Equivalent | Blue | Blue | Blue | | | Blue | | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue |
| Recent degree? | | | Blue | | | Blue | | Blue | Blue | Blue | |
| Foreign equivalent included? | | | Blue | | | | | | | | Blue |
| Research focus | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue |
| Training focus | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue |
| Temporary | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue |
| Supervised | | | Blue | | | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue |
| Mentorship | | Blue | | | | | | | | | Blue |
| Full-time | Blue | | | | | Blue | | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue |
| Publications | Blue | | | | | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | |
| Clinical fellows? | | | | | | | | | | Blue | |

Postdoc Definitions Research: List of Selected Formal Definitions

| Definition Source | Full definition |
|---|---|
| National Academy of Sciences (NAS) (2000 Report) | <p>Defining the Postdoctoral Position: With the rapid growth and importance of the postdoctoral population, some institutions are attempting formal definitions using some or all of these criteria: [1]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The appointee has received a PhD or doctorate equivalent. [2]• The appointment is viewed as an apprenticeship—a training or transitional period preparatory to a long-term academic, industrial, governmental, or other fulltime research career.• The appointment involves full-time research or scholarship. [3]• The appointment is temporary.• The appointee is expected to publish (and receive credit for) the results of research or other activities performed during the period of the appointment. <p>[1] Draws on criteria suggested by the American Association of Universities (Committee on Postdoctoral Education, Report and Recommendations, Washington, DC, March 31, 1998) and by Vanderbilt University School of Medicine (Chalkey presentation at COSEPUP's Dec. 1999 workshop).</p> <p>[2] E.g., the MD, DDS, DVM, or other professional degrees in science and engineering.</p> <p>[3] However, in some disciplines, such as mathematics, the postdoctoral experience commonly includes a major teaching element. Also, some postdoctoral experiences, such as the National Academies' and AAAS Fellowships, introduce the postdoc to the field of public policy.</p> |
| NSF/NIH (Jan 2007) | <p>An individual who has received a doctoral degree (or equivalent) and is engaged in a temporary and defined period of mentored advanced training to enhance the professional skills and research independence needed to pursue his or her chosen career path.</p> |
| National Science Foundation Survey of Graduate Students and Postdoctorates in Science and Engineering (GSS) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The appointee holds a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate (e.g., Sc.D., M.D., D.D.S., D.O., D.V.M., or foreign degrees equivalent to U.S. doctorates)• The doctorate was awarded recently, generally within the last 5 years• The appointment is for a limited term, the limit generally being 5–7 years• The appointment is primarily for the purpose of training in research or scholarship• The appointee works under the supervision of a senior scholar in a department or research unit affiliated with the university• These Postdoctorates may have different titles—do not include clinical fellows and those with appointments in residency training programs in medical and health professions, unless research training under the supervision of a senior mentor is the primary purpose of the appointment |

| Definition Source | Full definition |
|---|---|
| Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) (2008 questionnaire) | A “postdoc” is a temporary position primarily for gaining additional education and training in research, usually awarded in academe, industry, or government. |
| Survey of Doctoral Recipients (SDR) (2006 questionnaire) | A “postdoc” is a temporary position awarded in academe, industry, a non-profit organization or government primarily for gaining additional education and training in research. |
| American Association of Universities (AAU) (originally crafted 1998) | <p>Definition of a postdoctoral appointment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appointee was recently awarded a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate (e.g., Sc.D., M.D.) in an appropriate field; and • The appointment is temporary; and • The appointment involves substantially full-time research or scholarship; and • The appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time academic and/or research career; and • The appointment is not part of a clinical training program; and • The appointee works under the supervision of a senior scholar or a department in a university or similar research institution (e.g., national laboratory, NIH, etc.); and • The appointee has the freedom, and is expected, to publish the results of his or her research or scholarship during the period of the appointment. |
| National Postdoc Association (NPA) (downloaded from NPA URL 2007) | <p>The NPA believes that the following are essential to a proper postdoctoral experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to career independence through the development of professional skills that enable the postdoc to actively pursue a career of his/her own choosing. • Supervision by at least one senior scholar who actively promotes the postdoc’s professional development. • An individual development plan (IDP) that incorporates equally the postdoc’s career and training goals and the mentor’s research goals. • Pursuit of basic, clinical, or translational projects so long as effort is focused primarily on research. • Publication of the results of the postdoc’s research and scholarship during their appointment. • As the postdoctoral appointment is temporary by nature, the aggregate amount of time spent as a postdoc is recommended to not exceed five years. • As postdocs are important members of the host institution’s community, appropriate levels of compensation, health care, and other benefits commensurate with their essential status should be afforded, independent of the postdoc’s source of funding. |

| Definition Source | Full definition |
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| Sigma Xi (from 2005 survey) | <p>There is general agreement that a postdoctoral appointee has the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appointee has a Ph.D. or equivalent degree, • The degree was received recently, • The appointment is temporary, • The purpose of the appointment is training for a research career, • The appointment involves substantially full-time research or scholarship, • The appointee is expected to publish the results of his or her research, and • The appointee works under the supervision of a senior scholar or a department in a university or research institution. |
| American Association of Medical Colleges Graduate Research, Education and Training Group (GREAT) (downloaded from AAMC website 2008, originally adapted by AAMC in 1999) | <p>The postdoctoral appointment is temporary and conferred upon an individual who has recently been awarded a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate in an appropriate field and who will be involved in full-time research or scholarship. The appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time academic and/or research career, is supervised by a senior scholar, and the appointee has the freedom, and is expected, to publish the results of her/his research or scholarship during the period of the appointment.</p> |
| Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) (downloaded from UCSF PDA website 2008) | <p>The appointee was recently awarded a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate (e.g., Sc.D., M.D.) in an appropriate field; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appointment is temporary; and • The appointment involves substantially full-time research or scholarship; and • The appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time academic and/or research career; and • 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 • The appointee works under the supervision of a scholar or a department in a university or similar research institution (e.g., national laboratory, NIH, etc.); and • The appointee is expected to publish the results of his or her research or scholarship during the period of the appointment, in consultation with his or her mentor. |
| University of California, San Francisco Postdoc Association (downloaded from UCSF PDA website 2008) | <p>A Postdoctoral Scholar is a person with a doctoral degree (e.g. Ph.D., M.D., or the foreign equivalent) assigned to a temporary appointment at a university or institution who is receiving full-time advanced academic and research training. A Postdoctoral Scholar trains under the direction and supervision of faculty mentors in preparation for academic or research careers. In addition to research, Postdoctoral Scholars may also engage in other activities to enhance teaching and professional skills</p> |
| Postdocjobs.com | <p>Anyone who is doing post-doctoral work as an interim employment.</p> |