



**Postdoctoral  
Scholar Services**

POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLAR  
STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES  
HANDBOOK 2020-2021

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Florida International University (FIU). As a R1 (Doctoral Universities – Very High Research Activity), the highest level awarded in The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education®, FIU greatly values our postdoctoral scholars, who contribute significantly to our research and scholarship. We are committed to providing our postdocs with the experience, training and professional development essential for long and successful careers.

FIU's strategic plan, [FIU Next Horizon 2025](#), honors the accomplishments of past strategic plans and continues our commitment to exceptional learner success and the highest level of university research and innovation as we strive for national recognition as a top-50 public university. As part of the strategic plan, the University made a firm commitment to grow and develop the postdoctoral experience. At FIU, postdoctoral scholars are provided with opportunities to work alongside distinguished faculty to prepare for career positions in academia, industry, government, or the nonprofit sector. Postdoctoral scholars bring expertise and creativity that enriches the research environment for all members of the University community, including graduate and undergraduate students, and they are vital to the research and scholarly mission of FIU.

The postdoctoral scholar experience at FIU provides individuals who have recently completed doctoral degrees with full-time programs of advanced academic preparation and research training under the guidance of supervising faculty mentors. A postdoctoral scholar appointment is a temporary and defined period of mentored advanced training to enhance the professional skills and independence needed to pursue a chosen career path.

FIU strives to provide stimulating, constructive, and dynamic experiences for 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 FIU. We hope this handbook will help you get off to a great start here and in the South Florida community. You will find practical and useful information as well as resources to help you settle into your life and work at FIU.

## PURPOSE OF THE FIU POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLAR HANDBOOK

This handbook is intended to provide postdoctoral scholars with helpful information, contacts, and suggestions as they embark on their career at FIU. The policies and guidance provided in this handbook may be changed at any time. The handbook does not represent a contract between FIU and the postdoctoral scholar appointee.

## WHAT IS “POSTDOC?”

A postdoctoral appointee (PA), as defined by the Florida State University System (SUS), is a trainee responsible to and under the direction of a principal investigator (PI) of a specific research program of a state university. Postdocs are appointed for the purpose of receiving further training in an academic program specialty and gaining experience in other areas of activity appropriate to a career as a university faculty member, in industry or other relevant types of organizations.

At FIU, a postdoctoral scholar is defined as an individual who is employed by FIU or by another primary employer, has recently received a Ph.D. degree or equivalent (e.g., Sc.D., M.D.), and is engaged in a defined period of mentored research and/or advanced training to enhance the professional skills and research independence needed to pursue his or her chosen career path.

Appointment of a FIU Postdoctoral Scholar must meet the following conditions:

- the appointee was recently awarded a doctorate degree in an appropriate field;
- the appointment is time-limited;
- the appointment involves substantial research, scholarship, clinical or instructional training;
- the appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time research, clinical or instructional career in academia, the private sector, or other relevant setting;
- the appointee works under the supervision of a faculty mentor;
- 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 has the freedom, and is expected, to publish the results of his or her research or scholarship.

## FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY (FIU)

FIU is a public university in the State of Florida, governed by a Board of Trustees. The 13 members of the FIU Board of Trustees are appointed by the Governor of the State of Florida and the Board of Governors of the State University System.

FIU has two major campuses: [Modesto A. Maidique Campus](#) (MMC) in western Miami-Dade County, and [Biscayne Bay Campus](#) (BBC) in North Miami Beach. FIU also has various other locations, including the [Engineering Center](#), near MMC; the [FIU at I-75](#) in Miramar; the business center in [Downtown on Brickell](#); and the [Miami Beach Urban Studios](#) (MBUS) on South Beach. For students seeking to learn abroad, the [Marriott Tianjin China Program](#) teaches hospitality and tourism management from a center in one of China's largest cities. Moreover, FIU operates vital research and cultural centers in South Florida such as the [Aquarius](#) undersea research program, [The Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU](#) and the [Wolfsonian FIU](#) art and history museum in Miami Beach.

In all of FIU's teaching, research, and service programs, as well as our engagement with the community, FIU continually reaffirms its commitment to be Worlds Ahead as it addresses the pressing social, technological and economic challenges of our communities, region and the world.

## OFFICE OF POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLAR SERVICES

The [Office of Postdoctoral Scholar Services \(OPSS\)](#) is a unit within the Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED). OPSS's mission is to serve as an academic center of excellence for postdoctoral scholars across the University. OPSS strives to foster a robust postdoctoral community, provide opportunities to enhance the postdoctoral experience and future success of 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 FIU.

OPSS engages the Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED) in supporting and facilitating postdoctoral scholars' endeavors in pursuing research funding, managing intellectual property and commercialization, and providing general administrative support of research endeavors.

The Postdoctoral Scholar Advisory Council meets monthly to provide guidance and feedback to FIU's Office of Postdoctoral Scholar Services. Applications are solicited each fall, and four to six postdoctoral scholars are invited to serve on the advisory council. Information about the 2020 – 2021 Postdoctoral Scholar Advisory Council may be found at this link: <http://postdocs.fiu.edu/advisory-board/>

## POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLAR APPOINTMENTS AND TERMS OF SERVICE

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 from an accredited organization. A postdoctoral position may be offered if the candidate has completed all of the requirements for a degree before the degree has been formally conferred, but proof that the degree has been conferred must be submitted to Academic Affairs on or before the first day of employment.

### Terms of Service

- Postdoctoral scholar appointments are time-limited and have fixed end dates.
- Postdoctoral appointments are renewed annually with a maximum target length of appointment of five years. Under special circumstances, as approved in advance by the Provost, postdoctoral appointments may be renewed and extended beyond the initial five years.
- Postdoctoral scholars may not be “self-funded.” Funding for salary must come from FIU or from clearly documented extramural funding sources, not from the postdoctoral scholars’ personal funds or savings.
- Any salary and/or stipend increases for postdoctoral scholars are to be recommended and approved in accordance with FIU policies and procedures.
- Promotion of postdoctoral scholars into different positions within the University must be based on completion of the postdoctoral scholar phase of training and a move to a permanent position. The promotion must follow University procedures and be approved by Academic Affairs.

## EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The expectations and responsibilities of postdoctoral scholars at FIU include:

- Open and timely discussion with the mentor of any problems encountered while completing their assigned tasks—mutual trust and communication between postdoctoral scholars and mentors are essential to building strong working relationships
- Conscientious performance of research or scholarship responsibilities, which may include teaching responsibilities
- Conformance to standards of responsible ethical conduct in research, including taking all required training courses
- Compliance with all relevant federal, state, municipal and institutional regulations and guidelines that relate to human subjects’ research, the care and use of laboratory animals, the use of hazardous materials, and general laboratory safety standards
- 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
- Prompt disclosure of any potential or perceived conflicts of interest
- Collegial conduct towards members of the research group
- Compliance with all applicable policies and procedures of the University and the department and/or responsible unit
- Maintenance of a laboratory notebook (if applicable) and/or other comparable records of research activity (e.g., data files related to manuscript analysis), which remain the property of FIU upon conclusion of the appointment

- Adherence to University standards regarding use of isotopes, chemicals, infectious agents, animals, human subjects, and the like (if applicable)

### **Individual Development Plan (IDP)**

*Within the first three months of being appointed*, each postdoctoral scholar is expected to create an individual development plan (IDP) approved by his/her mentor(s) that identifies short and long-term career objectives and a timetable for achieving them. The IDP can then form a basis for performance review by the mentor. The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) recommends a four-step process for developing and implementing the IDP:

Step 1: Conduct a self-assessment

Step 2: Survey career opportunities and developmental needs with your mentor

Step 3: Write an IDP, share the IDP with your mentor, and revise

Step 4: Implement the plan and revise as needed

The National Postdoctoral Association has identified six core competencies that can serve as a basis for the self-assessment and forming a training plan:

1. [Discipline-specific conceptual knowledge](#)
2. [Research skill development](#)
3. [Communication skills](#)
4. [Professionalism](#)
5. [Leadership and management skills](#)
6. [Responsible conduct of research](#)

More information regarding the IDP can be found at <http://www.faseb.org/portals/2/pdfs/opa/idp.pdf>

### **Expectations and Responsibilities of Postdoctoral Scholar Mentors**

The expectations and responsibilities of the mentors of FIU's postdoctoral scholars include:

- 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 appointment and update as needed
- Communicate regularly with postdoctoral scholars in order to provide regular and timely assessments of their performance, as well as provide career advice and job placement assistance
- 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 specific research projects
- Prepare an annual evaluation of performance and progress of the postdoctoral scholar's activities in a manner that is clear and timely. Progress associated with the Individual Development Plan (IDP) should be a basis of the mentor's performance evaluation of the postdoc. Sample Annual Review forms are available at <http://www.faseb.org/portals/2/pdfs/opa/idp.pdf> and <http://www.faseb.org/portals/2/pdfs/opa/SampleAnnualReview.pdf>

## **FIU POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLAR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

In recognition of the importance of providing career development opportunities to FIU's postdoctoral scholars, FIU provides a Postdoctoral Scholar Professional Development Program through OPSS. The objectives of the program are to (1) ensure the postdoctoral experience is positive for both the postdoctoral appointee and his/her mentor; (2) provide critical lessons for the postdoctoral appointee

that will contribute to a successful career, and (3) produce satisfied and successful FIU postdoctoral scholar alums.

Examples of professional development program elements include the following:

- Access to grant writing seminars
- Panels related to topics of interest to postdoctoral scholars
- Finding funding opportunities
- Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)
- Authorship
- CV/letter writing
- Commercialization and entrepreneurship opportunities

### **Childcare**

- [The Children's Creative Learning Center at FIU](#)

### **Other Useful Links**

- [FIU Dining Services](#)
- [FIU Recreation and Wellness Center](#)
- [FIU Environmental Health and Safety](#)
- [Campus Maps](#)
- [FIU Health](#)
- [Smoke free campus](#)
- [Employee Assistance and Wellness Program](#)
- [Faculty Mentoring Program](#)
- [FIU Human Resources](#)
- [FIU International Services](#)
- [Disability Resource Center](#)
- [FIU Center for Excellence in Writing](#)
- [Center for the Advancement of Teaching](#)
- [English Language Institute](#)
- [FIU apartment guide](#)

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Questions Related to Appointment as a Postdoctoral Scholar**

- 1. Are postdoctoral positions considered faculty appointments?**
  - Yes. Postdoctoral scholars are classified as faculty.
- 2. Can a postdoctoral scholar be appointed for less than one year?**
  - The initial appointment for a postdoctoral scholar can be for a minimum of 9 months; although most appointments are for 12 months.

**3. What is the correct protocol for appointing a postdoctoral scholar?**

- Departments should go through normal HR channels for postdoctoral positions. The <https://facultycareers.fiu.edu/> online system should be used. Each school or department should follow its existing procedure. However, minimum annual salary, length of appointment, and full-time status requirements must be met. **There are no advertising or search requirements for postdoctoral scholar positions.**

Questions Related to International Postdocs

**4. If I am interested in applying for a postdoctoral position at FIU but I am not a US 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 FIU Global Affairs webpage at <https://globalaffairs.fiu.edu/iss/>

**5. I have applied for a postdoc position at FIU and need a certified translation for my documents. Are there any services available through the University?**

- Florida International University considers evaluation reports from any member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES). Below are suggested vendors. This information is provided only as a possible source and you can choose outside of this list:

[Josef Silny & Associates](#)

Phone: 305-273-1616

Fax: 305-273-1338

[SpanTran](#)

Phone: 713-266-8805

Fax: 713-789-6022

Questions Related to Reappointment Letters and Evaluations

**6. 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.

**7. 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 and affiliates, 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 the Office of Postdoctoral Scholar Services and Academic 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 scholar 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 at <http://www.faseb.org/portals/2/pdfs/opa/idp.pdf> and <http://www.faseb.org/portals/2/pdfs/opa/SampleAnnualReview.pdf>

**8. Can postdoctoral scholars file grievances?**

- Florida International University encourages open communication between employees/ affiliates and management to address concerns. Therefore, the University is committed to resolving concerns through informal resolution whenever possible. However, if this should prove to be impossible, postdoctoral scholars can contact the Employee & Labor Relations Department at (305) 348-4186 for further assistance.

Questions Related to Grants and Funding

**9. Can a postdoctoral scholar be listed as the Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator on a proposal?**

- Per FIU Policy 2320.035, only FIU faculty in tenure or non-tenure-accruing track positions or personnel in an exempt position (subject to Office of Research and Economic Development approval) may submit a proposal as a Principal Investigator on behalf of Florida International University.
- Postdoctoral scholars may be allowed to be Principal Investigators under particular circumstances and shall be determined by the Office of Research and Economic Development in accordance with sponsor regulations.
- Postdoctoral scholars may serve as a Co-Investigator if an eligible FIU employee serves as principal investigator on the proposal.
- Refer to <https://policies.fiu.edu/files/362.pdf> for additional information.