

Postdoctoral Scholarship at UC Davis

Postdoctoral study at UC Davis encompasses both scholarship and training. Because the training aspect of postdoctoral studies can be difficult to define, this document is designed to inform both postdoctoral scholars and their principal investigator or PI (the laboratory head, usually a member of the Academic Senate faculty) of issues unique to individuals in this appointment.

Setting clear guidelines as to work responsibilities and discussing these together will help prevent misunderstandings and conflicts, allowing for a more productive and positive experience for both the postdoctoral scholar and the PI. Frequent evaluations, yearly at a minimum, should point out both strengths and areas for improvement. Ideally this evaluation should be a dialog about work performance on the part of the postdoctoral scholar and about the value and appropriateness of the mentoring on the part of the PI.

An important topic to discuss in the area of work responsibility is the PI philosophy on time distributed between work on assigned projects and work on related or more independent projects. Related to this is the relationship between work performed as a postdoctoral scholar under the supervision of a PI, and then subsequently as an independent investigator. These are best discussed in advance of a specific issue.

Each postdoctoral scholar is encouraged to choose one or two faculty mentors in addition to his/her primary mentor, to offer broader professional guidance. Each postdoctoral scholar should be provided an opportunity to be evaluated in the writing of manuscripts and/or grant proposals, in the writing of journal articles, and if possible, in the instruction of graduate students, undergraduate students, and/or technicians. A particularly useful experience is reviewing proposals and manuscripts.

Postdoctoral scholars should discuss with their PI how research results are disseminated and the prospects for attendance and presentation at scholarly meetings. A related topic is the nature of the support provided to attend such meetings.

Postdoctoral appointments are limited in time. The assumption is that this appointment is a stepping stone to a future career. Postdoctoral scholars and their mentors should discuss future job prospects and search strategies. Postdoctoral scholars and their mentors should arrive at a clear understanding regarding the amount of time to be spent by the postdoctoral scholar in conducting a job search and interviewing for his or her next position.