

POLICY DOCUMENT

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWS

AT

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

Reference number of this document	POL-2017-001
Purpose	Policy governing postdoctoral research fellows at Stellenbosch University
Type of document	Policy
Date of implementation	1 January 2017
Revision date	1 January 2022
Previous revisions	n.a
Owner of the policy	Vice-Rector (Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies)
Institutional functionary (curator) responsible for these rules	Senior Director (Research and Innovation); Division for Research Development (DRD)
Date of approval	28 November 2016
Approved by	Stellenbosch University Council
Keywords	postdoctoral, fellow, research, researcher, postdoc, co-supervision

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy pertains to the management of postdoctoral fellowships at Stellenbosch University. It aims to provide guidelines for the management of relationships between postdoctoral fellows, their hosts and the University. A postdoctoral fellowship is a career furthering opportunity that should enable the postdoc to apply for a faculty or other professional position. This policy aims to provide the framework for the successful functioning of postdoctoral fellows.

2. POLICY APPLICATION

The policy applies to all postdoctoral fellows, their academic hosts, their host departments and faculties and relevant support divisions.

This policy is intended for internal use only and does not confer any rights or privileges to any third party.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 “Postdoctoral fellows” (Postdocs) are PhD graduates who are establishing their academic research careers by primarily conducting research but can also undertake other academic activities such as lecturing and co-supervision of students, under the supervision of a host at the University.
- 3.2 The “host” of a postdoctoral fellow is an academic staff member in a relevant academic department, centre or institute at Stellenbosch University, who acts as supervisor and mentor to the Postdoc.
- 3.3 “Department” is the academic department, division, centre or institute at Stellenbosch University where the Postdoc is registered.
- 3.4 “Departmental Chair” is the head of the academic department, division, centre or institute where the Postdoc is registered.
- 3.5 “Fellowship” is the grant or stipend awarded to the Postdoc for his/her personal expenses for the duration of the postdoctoral research period.
- 3.6 “Memorandum of Understanding” (MOU) is the agreement between the host and the Postdoc on the one hand and the Postdoc and the University on the other, defining the expectations of each by the other.
- 3.7 “Division for Research Development (DRD)” is the entity responsible for the administration of the postdoctoral research fellowships and ensuring that appointments, activities and terminations comply with the regulations of the University and that the terms of the policy and MOU are complied with.

3.8 “Stellenbosch University International (SU International))” is the entity responsible for some administrative and support matters related to postdoctoral fellows.

3.9 “University” is Stellenbosch University (SU)

4. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of the policy is to set out the values and principles underpinning the Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme at Stellenbosch University (SU) and to set up a framework within which the appointment and hosting of Postdoctoral Research Fellows are conducted at SU.

5. AIMS OF THE POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS PROGRAMME AT STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

The postdoctoral fellows programme at SU have the following aims:

5.1 To provide established researchers and academic departments the opportunity to host postdoctoral fellows to strengthen their research cohort.

5.2 To provide postdoctoral fellows with the opportunity to develop and strengthen their research and professional skills at SU and to transfer their acquired skills to researchers and students at SU.

5.3 To provide SU the opportunity to expand its research portfolio through new areas of research and to enhance its research productivity through the increase of scientific publications and technology transfer.

5.4 To aid in the development of research capacity and the rejuvenation and transformation of the academic researcher cohort in South Africa by delivering exceptionally skilled graduates.

5.5 To strengthen internationalisation at SU and expand collaborative research networks through the hosting of international Postdocs.

6. BACKGROUND

6.1 Postdoctoral fellows (Postdocs) are productive and valuable members of the Stellenbosch University academic community. If accommodated and supervised appropriately, they can make a substantial contribution towards meeting the research and capacity development goals of the university and the country.

International Postdocs also enhance the internationalisation of SU, and have the potential to become important international collaborators.

- 6.2 The main goal of a postdoctoral fellowship should be the development and honing of the Postdocs' research and professional skills in preparation for a future academic or other professional career. As such, a postdoctoral fellowship is a transitional phase, designed to bridge the gap from PhD graduation to employment.
- 6.3 Each Postdoc is supervised and mentored by a host and accommodated within an academic department, centre or institute at the university. The host must offer leadership and guidance towards the Postdoc becoming an independent researcher and academic.
- 6.4 Postdocs may or may not be involved in teaching and co-supervision of postgraduate students, depending on the terms agreed upon in the MoU between the Postdoc and their host.
- 6.5 Postdocs define a separate category of researchers in the University system.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE POSTDOC

- 7.1 Although expectations from Postdocs, as agreed upon in individual MOUs, will vary depending on the environments in which they are hosted, there are a number of general expectations that SU has of its Postdocs in service of its institutional goals, which include the following:
 - (i) Accurate and meticulous record keeping of research activities and the regular provision of research data to the relevant host.
 - (ii) The undertaking of outputs-driven research. Articles in journals, books, or book chapters accredited by the Department of Higher Education and Training should be achievable within the duration of the fellowship, as agreed upon in the MoU.
 - (iii) A contribution to the research ethos of the host environment. This contribution should come in the form of willing participation in meetings, research seminars (especially those involving postgraduate students), knowledge transfer to colleagues and students; and the spending of a significant proportion of his/her time at one or more of the University campuses;
 - (iv) A contribution to the operation of a research laboratory where appropriate and as agreed with the relevant host.
 - (v) A contribution towards the University's goal to become an internationally acclaimed research-intensive university.
 - (vi) Submission of progress reports to Funders, where and when required.

8. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HOST

The Postdoctoral host accepts responsibility for the following:

- 8.1 Providing the Postdoc with acceptable research conditions as agreed upon in the individual MOU, and keeping an ongoing record of the research done by the Postdoc.
- 8.2 Meeting with the Postdoc on a regular basis and providing guidance for the research to be undertaken by the Postdoc.
- 8.3 Ensuring that the Postdoc is familiar with all institutional policies related to research.
- 8.4 Ensuring that sufficient research funding is available for the Postdoc to complete his/her research project(s).
- 8.5 Clearly communicating the required working hours in writing to the Postdoc before the uptake of the fellowship.
- 8.6 Informing the DRD and the Postdoc in writing of the premature termination of a fellowship, in terms of Clause 19.2 of this policy.
- 8.7 Informing the DRD in writing when fellowships are extended after the completion of a term, and adhering to the required administrative process for the extension period.
- 8.8 Ensuring that the proposed research project is structured in such a way that the desired outputs (see Clause 7.1 (ii)) are achievable within the duration of the fellowship.

9. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY AS REPRESENTED BY THE VICE-RECTOR: RESEARCH, INNOVATION & POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

- 9.1 The University recognises the right of Postdocs to formally organise themselves into representative bodies as well as to elect their representatives on University structures.
- 9.2 The University will ensure that an enabling institutional environment is provided to Postdocs.
- 9.3 The University will receive and administer postdoctoral fellowships.

10. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Prospective Postdocs should meet the following criteria:

- 10.1 Postdocs should normally take up the fellowship within five years of completing their doctoral studies at a higher education institution in South Africa or abroad.
- 10.2 If they have completed their doctoral studies more than five years prior to taking up the fellowship, written approval by the Vice-Rector: Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies is required. A motivation for such approval should be submitted by the prospective host via the DRD.
- 10.3 If not yet in possession of a doctoral degree, they need to submit a written statement from the Registrar (or equivalent) at the issuing University confirming that they satisfactorily fulfilled the University's requirements for a doctoral degree at the time of application for a postdoctoral research fellowship.
- 10.4 A Postdoc may not be in full time employment at Stellenbosch University at the time of taking up the postdoctoral fellowship.

11. DURATION OF FELLOWSHIP

Postdoctoral fellowships are a transitional phase. The duration of a postdoctoral fellowship is dependent on the relevant funder's stipulations. A postdoctoral fellowship may be extended by the host for a maximum period of five consecutive years, provided that sufficient funding is available and the host deems this to be desirable based on the research outputs record of the Postdoc.

The extension of a postdoctoral fellowship beyond the initial five-year period will be subject to written approval by the Vice-Rector: Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies, on submission of a motivation submitted via the DRD by the host.

12. ADVERTISING A POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

- 12.1 In compliance with SARS regulations governing "open bursaries", as well as with SU's policy for the payment of bursaries awarded by departments, all postdoctoral fellowships awarded through SU departments must be advertised.
- 12.2 The relevant academic host and/or his/her department is responsible for drafting and placing the Postdoc advertisement. The advertisement must be placed in at least one public forum other than the University's intranet or internal electronic bulletin board, in order to attract applications from postdoctoral candidates from

other universities. Examples of such public forums include the NRF's website, newspapers, flyers, pamphlets at open days and social media.

12.3 Copies of advertisements must be retained for record-keeping purposes. A copy of the advertisement must also be lodged with the DRD to ensure that the division is aware of all current Postdoc fellowships being offered at the University.

12.4 Postdoctoral positions where Postdocs have secured their own funding from external sources (South African or international) do not need to be advertised.

13. FUNDING

13.1 Funding for a postdoctoral fellowship may be sourced in a variety of ways, but is generally either

- (i) awarded to a host academic staff member via internal university funds or via an external funding agency, often as part of a larger grant; or
- (ii) awarded to a recent doctoral graduate or a person who has already completed a postdoctoral fellowship (whether it be at the same or another institution) by the relevant academic department, centre or institute, or as a result of an application to an external funding body.

13.2 Should funds from contract research be applied for a postdoctoral fellowship or top-up thereof, the contract must clearly identify the funding as that of a "postdoctoral fellowship" and should fit within the scope of an SU postdoctoral fellowship. Such funds may not be earmarked for "services rendered". In such a case, the DRD must be furnished with the relevant SU contract number (as allocated by the Research Contracts Office) for verification and auditing purposes.

13.3 The host must ensure that sufficient funding for a postdoctoral fellowship is available from a bona fide funding source for the duration of the written agreement reached with the relevant Postdoc.

13.4 Each funder has its own set of specific conditions that may result in an additional contractual agreement between the funder and the Postdoc.

13.5 The minimum level of funding for a full-time postdoctoral fellowship sponsored by SU will be revised annually by the Vice-Rector: Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies, and communicated to current and prospective Postdocs and their hosts by the DRD.

13.6 If allowed by a funder, a postdoctoral fellowship may be topped-up with institutional or other funds at the discretion of the host.

- 13.7 The Postdoc must ensure that he/she does not violate their fellowship or visa conditions with regard to any additional funding paid to them. The DRD is obliged to report any such contraventions to the relevant funding organisations (in terms of signed undertakings) and to the university's auditors.
- 13.8 The maximum amount of funding for a postdoctoral fellowship is not prescribed by any law, and should be at the discretion of the relevant host in consultation with the Departmental Chair.
- 13.9 A postdoctoral fellow is allowed to hold two or more fellowships at the same time, provided that this is in compliance with the stipulations of all relevant funding bodies.

14. STATUS AT STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

A Postdoc is neither a student nor an employee at Stellenbosch University, but defines the unique category of a Postdoctoral Fellow within all university structures.

15. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

- 15.1 The Postdoc is required to enter into a legally binding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the University, to be signed by the host, the Departmental Chair, the Senior Director: Research and Innovation (or his/her formal delegate) and the Postdoc. This MoU serves to provide a framework for the research to be done, and a means of monitoring the agreed-upon expectations of both host and Postdoc. It also protects all parties in the event of a dispute. The MoU must state that the Postdoc is required to comply with the University's code of conduct and all relevant policies.
- 15.2 The MoU does not constitute an offer of employment nor does it imply that an employment offer shall be made in the future.

16. FACILITIES AND BENEFITS

- 16.1 The Postdoc will be provided with adequate working space, equipment or regular access to required equipment through inter-departmental agreement, Central Analytical Facilities or regionally shared equipment, basic administrative facilities, including IT network access, printing, internet use, an institutional email address, library facilities and access to Campus Health Services. They are also eligible to apply for parking facilities and membership of Maties Sports and other university clubs.

- 16.2 Facilities and benefits provided to the Postdoc through his/her host department should be described in the MOU.

17. INDUCTION/ORIENTATION

The host is required to provide a new Postdoc with an orientation to the department, centre or institute in which they will undertake their research, including guidance to accessing the support, services and facilities available to them. The host is expected to provide ongoing advice and guidance to the Postdoc in this regard.

Further orientation with regards to settling into the broader University environment will be provided through the DRD and the SU International.

18. CODE OF CONDUCT, GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES AND COMPLAINTS

- 18.1 The Postdoc must subscribe to the University's code of conduct and all relevant institutional policies, as well as the conditions set in the MoU between host and Postdoc.
- 18.2 In the event of any dispute, the Postdoc and/or the host will have recourse to the normal dispute resolution processes of the University. The Postdoctoral Coordinator, or in case of any conflict of interest, the Senior Director of the DRD will serve as the first point of contact for Postdocs and their hosts in complaint or grievance processes. If the dispute is not resolved at this level, it will be referred to the Vice-Rector: Research, Innovation & Postgraduate Studies.

19. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 19.1 A Postdoc may not register for any degree at SU or another higher education institution during the term of the postdoctoral fellowship, without written permission from the host and the Senior Director: Research & Innovation.
- 19.2 Postdocs are encouraged to register for skills development workshops or short courses available at SU, provided that sufficient funds exist to sponsor their participation and the enrolment is supported by the relevant host.
- 19.3 In line with the University's Intellectual Property policy Postdocs will be assisted to develop new research initiatives and ideas.

20. TERMINATION OF FELLOWSHIP

- 20.1 Should a Postdoc wish to terminate his/her fellowship prior to the date agreed upon in the MOU, he/she should give at least thirty days' written notice to the host.
- 20.2 Should the host wish to terminate the hosting of a Postdoc, he/she needs to inform the Postdoctoral Coordinator (DRD) and Postdoc in writing, (electronic or hard copy), at least thirty days in advance. If required, the host and Postdoc will have recourse to the postdoctoral dispute resolution processes of the University, as mentioned at Clause 18.2.
- 20.3 A Postdoc and his/her host are required to inform the DRD, and submit an "exit form", when the Postdoc terminates his/her tenure at the university. Where such termination occurs before the Postdoc has completed her/his research or full tenure, the University reserves the right to recover all or some of the funds that have been paid to the Postdoc in advance.

21. INCOME TAX

The fellowships paid to Postdocs are exempt from normal income tax on condition that all the SARS regulations regarding remuneration, as described in the SARS Binding Class Ruling issued in accordance with article 78(2) of the Tax Administration Act (nr 28 of 2011) are fully complied with.

22. OTHER ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES AND ADDITIONAL REMUNERATION

- 22.1 Since it is required that the Postdoc professionally develops and experiences all parts of the academic profession, co-supervision of postgraduate students and teaching is allowed, in accordance with SARS regulations. These activities will be conducted at the discretion of the host, and the expectation of both parties should be clarified in the MoU.
- 22.2 Postdocs may not be employed as staff members by Stellenbosch University concurrent with receiving their fellowship.
- 22.3 Postdocs may not be remunerated for services rendered at or through SU, for example, to undertake contract research or professional consulting.
- 22.4 Where extra work is permitted in terms of the fellowship scheme, a total of up to 12 hours weekly of additionally paid work may be undertaken, as stipulated in the SARS Binding Class Ruling. This includes all other additionally remunerated academic activities, and is to be paid for at the University rate for workers with a PhD as determined by the Human Resources Division. Such remuneration will not be paid via the Postdoc fellowship system, but via the university Human Resources system. These payments are taxable in accordance with the prevailing tax legislation.

- 22.5 International Postdocs may also work in South Africa, in line with the above stipulations, provided that this is allowed by their individual visa conditions.
- 22.6 Postdocs are allowed to be official co-supervisors to under- and postgraduate students (Honours, Masters and PhD students), under the condition that:
- (i) Postdocs will only be co-supervisors, and not the primary supervisors of post-graduate students.
 - (ii) The Postdoc host approves his/her co-supervisory role on request of the Postdoc.
 - (iii) The co-supervision role be considered an integral part of the Postdoc's academic training, and that they receive appropriate guidance regarding their role as co-supervisor from the primary student supervisor as well as the host (where the host may not always be the primary supervisor).
 - (iv) Any additional payment for this role will form part of the stipulated allowed 12 hours per week additionally remunerated work.
 - (v) The duration of the Postdoc's tenure be carefully considered vis-à-vis the projected study period of the post-graduate student, prior to approving the Postdoc as co-supervisor.

23. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- 23.1 Postdocs are entitled to leave during periods when the University is officially closed, as well as on South African public holidays.
- 23.2 Postdocs will be allowed a minimum of twenty-one days leave of annual leave.
- 23.3 Maternity leave will be given according to funder stipulations and in agreement with the host.
- 23.4 Paternity leave needs to be negotiated with the host.
- 23.5 Postdocs can claim two days of sick leave in a month. Should more days of sick leave be required a medical certificate should be presented.
- 23.6 Should a Postdoc be absent from his/her host department for thirty days consecutively, without the prior written permission of the host, or written acceptance by the host of a motivation submitted by the Postdoc within a week after the start of the period of absence, the fellowship may be terminated with immediate effect.

24. MEDICAL AID

- 24.1 According to the regulations of the Department of Home Affairs, international Postdocs are required to become members of a South African medical aid. Should a Postdoc have been at the University for a period of more than 30 days without SA medical aid cover, he/she will be in contravention of this regulation and the appointment of such a Postdoc can be cancelled due to non-compliance. It is the Postdoc's responsibility to submit proof of membership of a South African medical aid to the Division for Research Development.
- 24.2 South African Postdocs make their own arrangements with regard to personal medical insurance.

25. PERSONAL ACCIDENT INSURANCE, LIABILITY AND INDEMNITY

Personal accident insurance is provided to all Postdocs at SU, the details of which will be made available by the DRD to each Postdocs and their host. Liability and indemnity are covered by the general rules of the University.

26. APPLICATION FOR RESEARCH GRANTS

Postdocs may apply for, and be the Principal Investigator on any grant application provided that:

- (i) The fellowship and potential grant funder have no restrictions on postdoctoral fellows as grantees;
- (ii) The host approves the application, and;
- (iii) The duration of the Postdoc's tenure correlates with the duration of the grant.

27. OWNERSHIP OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (IP)

Terms of the SU policy in respect of the Commercial Exploitation of Intellectual Property (<http://www.innovus.co.za/media/documents/Innovus%20Beleid.pdf>) pertaining to SU students will apply *mutatis mutandis* to postdoctoral fellows regarding the IP created during the term of their stay at SU.

28. POLICY GOVERNANCE

- 28.1 The owner of this policy is responsible for the existence, updating and implementation of the policy and for ensuring that a curator and related structures and roles are appointed and function effectively.
- 28.2 The curator of this policy is responsible to ensure the formulation, approval, revision, communication and release of this policy. The curator is also responsible for the interpretation and implementation of the policy.

29. ACTIONS FOR NON-COMPLIANCE

The University may take the necessary steps, in accordance with the provisions of its disciplinary code, against any person who is found to be in breach of the requirements of this policy.