

## **OFFICE OF POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS**

### *Quick Reference Guide for Faculty*

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) was established to provide support to postdocs, faculty and administrators in all facets of a postdoc's experience at Columbia. The following is a brief synopsis of some issues that may be of interest to you and your postdocs:

#### **POSTDOC APPOINTMENT DEFINITIONS**

There are two types of appointment available for non-clinical Postdoctoral Officers of Research as specified in the University's Faculty Handbook.

1. **Postdoctoral Research Scientists/Scholars** are paid a salary through the Office of the Controller or by an affiliated hospital or institute, often through a sponsored research award.
2. **Postdoctoral Research Fellows** are generally not paid a salary and usually receive fellowship stipends or training grants directly from an external funding agency.

OPA will also support all non-ACGME (Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education) Postdoctoral Clinical Fellows. They are defined by the University's Faculty Handbook.

1. **Postdoctoral Clinical Fellows** may simultaneously hold appointments as officers of instruction in the rank of assistant in clinical (department). Depending in the source of funding, one of these appointments will be full-time and the other, part-time. When the fellow receives a stipend, the appointment as a postdoctoral clinical fellow is full-time and the assistant in clinical (department) is part-time. The reverse is true when the individual is paid a salary.

In all instances, they may be appointed for full or part-time service, for a term of up to 12 months, which is renewable for a total period of service of three years. Further extensions of an appointment in either category require the prior permission of the Provost.

#### **ELIGIBILITY**

In order to become a postdoc, the candidate of interest **must have his/her MD or PhD**; depositing the Ph.D. for defense at a later date is not sufficient. If the dissertation has been successfully defended, but the degree not yet awarded, a letter from the applicable university's registrar should be obtained, stating the date on which the degree will be conferred. If the letter is not written in English, it must be accompanied by an official English translation.

## **OFFER LETTERS AND CHECKLISTS**

OPA has sample offer letters available upon request. Each letter specifies the terms of appointment and the postdoc's duties; discusses compensation and benefits; and refers the postdoc to online sources of additional information, including OPA's Postdoctoral Officers of Research Handbook.

Also available are checklists ([www.columbia.edu/cu/postdocs/faculty/mentoring.html](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/postdocs/faculty/mentoring.html)) for the postdoc when he/she accepts your offer (this should be sent to the postdoc with the Offer Letter) and once he/she has arrived at Columbia.

## **MINIMUM SALARY LEVELS**

The University has established minimum salary levels, based on NIH regulations. Please contact OPA for the most up-to-date wage information.

## **HEALTH BENEFITS**

Postdoctoral health benefits can be determined, in large part, by his/her title.

1. **A Postdoctoral Research Scientist/Scholar and Postdoctoral Clinical Fellow (who is a full-time Assistant in Clinical)**, as an employee, has fringe benefit costs charged to his/her salary and is able to choose from among the various plans offered to all other officers at the University. The available plans and co-pays are specified in the University's "Benefits in Brief" ([www.hr.columbia.edu/hr/documents/benefits-fobib2008/pdf-ver.pdf](http://www.hr.columbia.edu/hr/documents/benefits-fobib2008/pdf-ver.pdf)).
2. **A Postdoctoral Research Fellow and any Postdoctoral Clinical Fellow on a stipend** is not considered an employee. He/she can enroll in a health plan as described at [www.hr.columbia.edu/hr/benefits/postdoc/postdoc/index.html](http://www.hr.columbia.edu/hr/benefits/postdoc/postdoc/index.html). The co-pays are higher than those of an employee, as no fringe rate is charged to the postdoc's stipend.

Some Postdoctoral Research/Clinical Fellows find that the University's Student Health Services' Health Plan ([www.cumc.columbia.edu/student/health/insurance/overview.html](http://www.cumc.columbia.edu/student/health/insurance/overview.html)) is a lower cost alternative although it is less robust in coverage options.

All postdocs must enroll in a health plan within 31 days of their date of hire. This sign-up should occur after the postdoc attends the Medical Center ([asp.cumc.columbia.edu/hrorient/welcome.asp](http://asp.cumc.columbia.edu/hrorient/welcome.asp)) or Morningside ([www.hr.columbia.edu/hr/learning-dev/orientation/morningside/index.html](http://www.hr.columbia.edu/hr/learning-dev/orientation/morningside/index.html)) Welcome Program. OPA will also be holding orientations that will cover health benefits.

## HOUSING

### **Medical Center Campus –**

The Postdoctoral Housing website ([www.cumc-housing.columbia.edu/postdoc2.html](http://www.cumc-housing.columbia.edu/postdoc2.html)) is very informative and you should direct your postdoc to this site prior to his/her arrival on campus.

It is important to enter your postdoc's name in the CUMC housing lottery as soon as he/she accepts your offer.

Adele Selik is the Director of Postdoctoral Housing in the Office of Housing Services. She should be contacted directly with any questions. She can be reached at (212) 305-4930 or via email at [as1034@columbia.edu](mailto:as1034@columbia.edu).

### **Morningside Campus –**

University Apartment Housing (UAH) maintains housing for Postdocs on the Morningside campus. Their website ([www.columbia.edu/cu/ire/postdoc.html](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ire/postdoc.html)) includes a link to the UAH housing application and annual rates.

In order to apply for UAH housing, your department must provide username and log-in to access the application. UAH receives all postdoc housing applications and then forwards them to the appropriate sponsoring department for review and approval. Postdoc housing is very limited in supply and is not guaranteed until approval is obtained from your department. **Please approve requests as soon as possible so that your postdoc does not lose out on eligible housing opportunities.**

Any questions regarding postdoc housing on the Morningside campus can be directed to Marge Jordan, Coordinator, at UAH. She can be contacted at (212) 854-9313 or via e-mail ([mj9@columbia.edu](mailto:mj9@columbia.edu)).

## **INTERNATIONAL POSTDOCS**

As soon as your postdoc accepts his/her offer, please direct them to the appropriate Immigration Office in order to start the visa process.

### **Medical Center Campus –**

International Affairs Office (IAO):  
Black Building, 126B  
(212) 305-5455  
Kathy McVeigh, Director ([kcm1@columbia.edu](mailto:kcm1@columbia.edu))  
Bonnie Garner, Assistant Director ([blg12@columbia.edu](mailto:blg12@columbia.edu))

### **Morningside Campus –**

International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO):  
524 Riverside Drive, Suite 200  
(212) 854-3587  
Sarah Taylor, Associate Director ([sft1@columbia.edu](mailto:sft1@columbia.edu))  
Jane Acton Chung, Assistant Director ([ja378@columbia.edu](mailto:ja378@columbia.edu))

“Essentials Information for New International Students and Scholars”  
([www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/incoming](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/incoming)) is an excellent resource for postdocs on both campuses.

## **POSTDOCTORAL OFFICER MENTORSHIP**

On May 2, 2007, Congress passed a law (H. R. 1867) stating that all NSF grant applications that request funds for postdocs are required to include descriptions of mentoring activities. While the NIH does not currently mandate mentorship documentation in grant applications, they did issue a statement regarding postdoctoral mentorship (<http://grants1.nih.gov/training/q&a.htm#mentor>)

Guidelines to mentoring postdocs can be found on the OPA website  
([www.columbia.edu/cu/postdocs/faculty/mentoring.html](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/postdocs/faculty/mentoring.html)).

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

OPA is available to mediate any disputes among postdocs, departments, and administrators. Please contact our office immediately if an issue arises. We are here to help.

## **OPA SERVICES**

Our goal is to enhance the educational and training experiences of the University's postdoctoral appointees. We act as an advocate for postdocs through the provision of administrative support and the development of communication among postdocs, faculty and administrators.

- The OPA website is visited frequently by graduate students looking for postdoc positions at Columbia. We would like to be a repository for these openings. PIs and DAs should feel free to submit available openings to [postdocaffairs@columbia.edu](mailto:postdocaffairs@columbia.edu).
- Every other month, starting in August 2008, OPA will hold a New Postdoc Orientation for incoming appointees. The location of the orientation will rotate between the Morningside and Medical Center campuses. The presentation is intended to introduce postdocs to the University, its research, its institutional resources and some of the benefits to being a postdoc at Columbia. The format is informal with discussion encouraged and is followed by a social meet and greet.
- OPA will offer a several series of skills and job search seminars to supplement the training postdocs receive in their labs. Topics such as Grantsmanship, Responsible Conduct of Research, Making Scientific Presentations, Lab Management, and Career Paths with alumni will be offered at least once a year – with the schedule available on the OPA website.
- We plan to host social events for postdocs on both campuses. Events will be directed to all postdocs with many including their spouses and children.

## **OPA CONTACT**

Please do not hesitate to contact OPA if you have any questions or concerns. We look forward to working with you!

Kathryn Espiritu, Director  
[postdocaffairs@columbia.edu](mailto:postdocaffairs@columbia.edu)  
(212) 854-0462 (Morningside)  
(212) 305-4073 (Medical Center)  
[www.columbia.edu/cu/postdocs](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/postdocs)