



Memorandum

To: Biomedical Postdoctoral Programs

From: Dawn Bonnell, Senior Vice Provost for Research

Date: September 22, 2022

Subject: Update Regarding Effective Dates of Postdoc Term Limit in the Revised Policy for Postdoctoral Trainees at the University of Pennsylvania

Please share this memo with your faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and staff as appropriate

During the last academic year, the Penn community engaged in an examination of the Policy for Postdoctoral Trainees to determine if changes were warranted. One motivating factor was the lack of a grievance process for the Postdocs. The [new policy](#) was posted in the Almanac on June 21, 2022.

The revised postdoc policy includes substantive changes that provide support for postdocs throughout their experience at Penn. A formal grievance process has been included, as well as social support resources. The framework for professional development includes additional details regarding key elements of responsible conduct of research training and a mentor meeting at least annually that includes a discussion of the postdoc's individualized development plan (IDP).

Another revision to the policy modified the postdoc term limit from 5 years at Penn to 5 years total. In order to develop the resources to facilitate the term limit included in the new policy, this new term limit will apply only to those hired after the term limit clause becomes effective, which will be on July 1, 2023. Current postdocs and those hired prior to July 1, 2023 retain the current 5-year term limit at Penn, regardless of previous experience.

A waiver of the term limit can be requested. Requests would typically be for unexpected or extraordinary circumstances. Examples include, but are not limited to, situations when a postdoc is limited in their ability to perform a significant portion of their research due to an unforeseen reason, such as a medical condition, family situation, community circumstances such as a pandemic, or other unexpected challenges such as a significant delay in research due to equipment failure. A request for a waiver should be sent by the faculty mentor to the department chair or division chief who will consult with the appropriate administrative support office for postdocs within their school, if applicable. If approved by the department, the chair will submit the request to the OVPR for final approval.

For those who would benefit from continuing research at Penn after the 5-year term limit, alternative employment classifications are being explored and further guidance will be provided later in the year. All terms in the postdoc policy take effect as of July 1, 2022, except for the 5-year term limit which will take effect on July 1, 2023.