

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Teaching Guidelines for Postdoctoral Research Scientists, Scholars and Fellows

I. Introduction

Each year, Columbia University (the **University**) appoints a large number of postdoctoral research scientists or scholars and postdoctoral research fellows (collectively, **Postdocs**) who are engaged in a limited period of mentored research and/or scholarly training in order to acquire the professional skills needed to pursue a chosen career path. Postdocs interested in academic careers often seek opportunities to expand their teaching experience.

By establishing these general guidelines with respect to teaching, the University underscores its commitment, when possible, to providing teaching opportunities to Postdocs, while at the same time ensuring that such opportunities are offered and managed in accordance with all applicable governmental regulations, funding agency requirements and University policies.

These Guidelines cover only a Postdoc's full or partial responsibility for teaching a for-credit course at the University.

These Guidelines do not apply to postdoctoral clinical or residency fellows in light of the fact that their roles do not encompass teaching for-credit courses at the University.

II. Effective Date and Scope

The effective date of this Policy is October 1, 2018.

These Guidelines do not supersede the "Columbia University Guidelines for Incidental Career Development Activities for Postdoctoral Research Scientist, Scholars and Fellows", dated August 25, 2016, which permit Postdocs to engage in compensable instructional activities that do not involve teaching a course for up to 10 hours per week.

III. Guidelines

A. Eligibility

The eligibility of a Postdoc to teach is determined in part by the type of sponsor that supports the Postdoc. Sponsors include external agencies, including federal government agencies and other external sponsors, as well as the University's departments and schools. For purposes of determining eligibility to teach and compensation for teaching, Postdocs fall into one of the following categories:

1. Postdocs whose duties include teaching as part of their training programs.

A Postdoc may have teaching responsibilities included as part of the terms and conditions of his/her appointment. In this situation, a Postdoc may not be paid additional salary for teaching over and above his/her Postdoctoral salary.

2. Postdocs whose salaries are funded from sponsored research, including federal grants.

Most Postdocs at the University are funded by grants where the Postdoc is hired to work on one or more particular research projects. With the approval of his/her Principal Investigator (**PI**), a Postdoc may teach a course if (1) the terms of the grant permit it and any required sponsor approvals are obtained; (2) the effort devoted to research and the amount of salary charged to the grant are reduced commensurate with the effort required for teaching; and (3) the teaching is funded by an appropriate, typically nonsponsored, funding source. The combined effort for sponsored research and teaching may not exceed 100% and the Postdoc may not be paid additional salary for teaching over and above his/her Postdoctoral salary. More information about the University's effort reporting policy and process is available at www.effortreporting.columbia.edu

The Postdoc should expect that teaching a course should generally require at least 25% of the Postdoc's effort during a semester. This percentage would need to be adjusted if the actual time involved in teaching is greater or less than originally expected. In the event that the rates of pay for the Postdoc's sponsored research and teaching activities are different, the PI must confer with the Postdoc regarding the effort expended on teaching and research, to ensure that the effort certification of the Postdoc reasonably reflects the Postdoc's actual effort on both. Salary payable in connection with a sponsored project may never subsidize teaching.

3. Postdocs who are funded from a fellowship.

Some Postdocs are funded by fellowships, either from the federal government (i.e., T32 traineeships and F32 fellowships) or from other governmental or private sources. With the approval of his/her PI or mentor, a Postdoc may teach and receive salary for such only if the terms of the fellowship permit it and only to the extent permitted. Generally, the services must occur on a limited part-time basis apart from the normal research or training activities and cannot interfere with, detract from or prolong the Postdoc's training. Most training programs require a minimum commitment of 40 hours per week; teaching must be in addition to that commitment. The teaching should be relevant to a Postdoc's training as a scientist-educator.

4. International Postdocs

International Postdocs must receive the prior approval of the International Students and Scholars Office (for the relevant campus) before engaging in any teaching to ensure that such activity is consistent with applicable visa requirements.

B. General Requirements

1. All courses must be offered through a department, with the course and funding approved in accordance with normal procedures.
2. A Postdoc's research training experience must remain paramount and the Postdoc and his/her PI or mentor must ensure that teaching does not jeopardize the quality or quantity of time devoted to research training.
3. As indicated above, a salaried Postdoc may not be paid additional salary for teaching over and above his/her postdoctoral salary. A Postdoc's effort on sponsored projects must be reduced commensurate with the effort required to teach the course. In the event that the salary rate for the teaching is different from the salary rate for research, the appropriate adjustment must be made to the Postdoc's effort certification so that it reasonably reflects the Postdoc's effort on research and teaching.
4. A Postdoc with full or partial responsibility for teaching a for-credit course must be given an appointment as a Lecturer or Adjunct Assistant Professor, as appropriate, in the department in which the course is taught. In general, salary associated with teaching should be paid as part of the instructional appointment. However, in those cases where the sponsor's funding pays for both research and instructional responsibilities, the Postdoc's total salary paid by the sponsor should be paid as part of his/her research position and the Postdoc should also receive a zero-salary instructional appointment for the specific period when he/she is teaching.¹

C. Review

On a regular basis, these Guidelines will be reviewed to ensure that they are working as expected and to assess whether any adjustments are required.

¹ In a limited number of additional circumstances, zero-salary instructional appointments may be approved on a case-by-case basis.