

## Postdoctoral Scholar Appointments

### Who are postdocs?

Postdoctoral research associates and postdoctoral fellows are individuals who have received a doctoral (or terminal) degree and are engaged in a temporary and defined period of mentored advanced training to enhance the professional skills and research independence needed to pursue his or her chosen career path. At Illinois, we expect that the degree will have been conferred within ten years of the starting date and that the appointment can last a maximum of five years.

The University of Illinois has several criteria for appointments for postdoctoral research associates and postdoctoral fellows. These criteria are:

- **Doctoral or terminal degree.** Must have completed a doctoral or terminal degree.
- **Recent recipient of degree.** The offer must be accepted within five years of the receipt of doctoral or terminal degree.
- **Appointment length.** An individual can be a postdoctoral research associate at Illinois up to a maximum of 5 years.

### A few facts about Illinois postdocs

- Almost 600 on campus
- About 60% international
- Mostly in science & engineering fields

### Postdoctoral research associates

- Employees of the University
- Typically paid from faculty research grants.

### Postdoctoral fellows

- NOT employees of the University. Do not provide service to the University.
- Receive a stipend to support their continued training. Usually funded through competitive fellowship competitions from organizations like the NIH or American Heart Association.
- (Some who have been employed previously as a postdoctoral research associate may be eligible to request approval to take a leave of absence to accept the fellowship.)

	Postdoctoral Research Associates	Postdoctoral Fellows
Employee class	PA or PB (depends on benefit eligibility)	PC
SURS	Eligible according to criteria for all employees <b>Many J-1 postdocs are not eligible</b>	Not eligible
Health insurance	Eligible according to criteria for all employees <b>Many J-1 postdocs are not eligible</b>	Not eligible for state plans Can request reimbursement Can request dental and vision coverage <a href="http://humanresources.illinois.edu/employees/new-hires/policy-on-benefit-coverage-for-postdoctoral-fellows.html">http://humanresources.illinois.edu/employees/new-hires/policy-on-benefit-coverage-for-postdoctoral-fellows.html</a>

Tax Information	Same as other employees	Withholding only for non-resident aliens Do not receive W-2s <a href="http://www.grad.illinois.edu/postdocs/taxinformationfellows">www.grad.illinois.edu/postdocs/taxinformationfellows</a>
Leave	Eligible for leaves like academic employees  <b>Do not receive cumulative sick leave</b>  <b>Offered PDRA after 8/15/19, no compensable vacation leave</b>	Not eligible for employee leaves
Tuition waivers	Eligible according to standard criteria	Not eligible

### Benefits Eligibility and International Postdoctoral Research Associates

- Postdocs on F and J visas must meet the IRS’s “substantial presence test” before becoming benefits eligible
- Payroll Office makes this determination as part of the Tax Status Review appointment
- Period of non-eligibility can be around 2 years, but differs with each situation
- Many of these postdocs must have insurance that meets Dept. of State requirements
  - ISSS has a list of insurance companies that provide these policies
- If not eligible for CMS insurance, may provide assistance for insurance premiums
  - Details: Units will need to process a job record change HRFE transaction indicating in the memo that an insurance stipend needs to be added, the amount per month, and the effective date. IHR receives list of people who have become benefits-eligible and removes this stipend as needed.

### Notice Rights and Postdoctoral Research Associates

- Postdoctoral Research Associates serving on 1 FTE appointment, whose positions are 100% funded from “hard” money are entitled to notice of non-reappointment per the University’s Statutes.
- Notice of non-reappointment for a notice-eligible Postdoc position where the service basis is “Twelve-Month service”: Notice of non-reappointment must be issued by the Board of Trustees office at least six months prior to the conclusion of the current employment contract (NOA) in order to conclude employment at the end of the current contract. If notice is issued by the Board of Trustees later than

six months prior to the end of the current contract, then the notice must be accompanied by a terminal contract for one final appointment year of service.

- Example: If current contract is through 08-15-XX, then unit must contact IHR by mid-January regarding issuing a notice of nonreappointment so that the Board of Trustees can issue the notice by 02-16-XX in order to end employment on 08-15-XX.
- Example: If current contract is through 08-15-XX and notice is not issued by the Board of Trustees office by 02-16-XX, then notice of non-reappointment must be issued for another full year, from the following 08-16-XX through 08-15-XX in this date range example.
- Notice of non-reappointment for a notice-eligible Postdoc position where the service basis is “Academic Year service”: Notice of nonreappointment must be issued by the Board of Trustees office by 03-01-XX in order to conclude employment/service on 05-15-XX (although, on the 9-over-12 service/pay, payroll payments would continue through 08-15-XX). If notice is issued by the Board of Trustees later than March 1, then the notice must be accompanied by a terminal contract for one final appointment year of service. (Essentially, the notice period would be the duration of the following Academic Year, service from 08-16-XX through 05-15-XX, pay would be from 08-16-XX through 08-15-XX.)
- In all situations involving questions related to notice of non-reappointment, please contact Illinois Human Resources ([ihr-nonr@illinois.edu](mailto:ihr-nonr@illinois.edu)).
- Certain Postdoctoral Research Associate positions are not eligible for notice of non-reappointment from the Board of Trustees for one of the following reasons:
  - Visiting Postdoctoral Research Associate, due to the presence of the Visiting title modifier, carries no notice rights/eligibility
  - Part-time Postdoctoral Research Associate position (only full-time positions are eligible for notice of non-reappointment from the Board of Trustees)
  - Postdoctoral Research Associate position, full-time and for either Twelve-Month or Academic Year service basis, funded either fully or in part by “soft” money (generally grant funds). If any portion of the total salary is from “soft” money, then the Postdoc position is not eligible for notice of non-reappointment from the Board of Trustees. Note that a unit cannot make a labor distribution change from hard money to soft money at the last minute in order to avoid notice rights where, otherwise, notice would be due to the employee.
  - In the examples above where the Postdoc position is not eligible for notice of non-reappointment from the Board of Trustees, Illinois Human Resources recommends that the supervisor provide a written communication regarding the upcoming employment end date. Please contact IHR for a courtesy letter template.

### **Postdoctoral Affairs Office Contact Information**

Alexis Thompson, PhD  
Assistant Dean of Graduate Student Development and Postdoctoral Affairs

204 Coble Hall, MC 322  
801 S. Wright St.  
Champaign, IL 61820  
[PostdocOffice@illinois.edu](mailto:PostdocOffice@illinois.edu)  
217-333-4610