



**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**  
**Policies and Procedures**

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## Postdoctoral Fellows Policy

### 1. Policy

Simon Fraser University wishes to provide a policy framework for researchers who have recently completed a doctorate and are accepted to carry on further research, for a limited period of time, in association with faculty members of Simon Fraser University. They are valued members of the community, who may be funded through fellowships provided by an external agency or through research grants or contracts held by SFU faculty members. The principal objectives of these postdoctoral researchers are usually to broaden their research expertise, build associations with established researchers and strengthen their publication record, thereby enhancing their future employment opportunities. As researchers, they have the opportunity to make significant contributions to their chosen field, the University, faculty researchers and graduate students.

The Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies has primary responsibility for administration of this Policy.

### 2. Definitions

Postdoctoral Fellows (PDFs) are individuals who, at the time of appointment, completed a doctoral degree, normally within the previous four years and who are undertaking additional advanced research at Simon Fraser University beyond the doctorate in association with one or more SFU faculty members for a limited period of time, usually one to three years. Exceptions to these time frames will be possible in cases where the research career has been delayed due to factors such as parental responsibilities or alternate career paths. Granting agencies may impose different time frames on PDF's whom they fund.

A number of other titles have been used to designate PDFs, both by units within the University and by external agencies; these include Postdoctoral Research Associate, Research Associate and Postdoctoral Researcher. In this Policy, the term Postdoctoral Fellows, abbreviated by "PDFs," will be used to designate all, irrespective of designation by others or their source of funding.

This Policy does not apply to University Research Associates, as described under SFU Policy R50.01, who have academic qualifications similar to those required for appointment to the faculty and may be appointed for extended periods.

In this Policy, the following two designations will be used to differentiate between PDFs in cases where the source of funds to pay stipends to PDFs results in differentiation within the terms of this Policy.

External PDFs receive their stipends either directly from an external agency or through SFU from funds that are provided to SFU by an external agency for administration on behalf of that agency, via "global payments." The terms of appointment, including remuneration, are normally set by the external agency.

Grant PDFs receive their compensation from research grants or contracts ("grant funds") awarded to SFU faculty members ("grant holders") and, under SFU Policy R50.02, are considered to be employees of the grant holder (i.e. they are "grant employees"), with the funds administered on behalf of the grant holder by SFU. The source of the grant or contract funds can either be external or internal to the University. The terms of the appointment of Grant PDFs, including remuneration and benefits, normally are set by the grant holder.

The Faculty Supervisor is the regular SFU faculty member with primary responsibility for the recruitment, appointment and supervision of a PDF; all PDFs must have a Faculty Supervisor. Although a group of faculty members may pool resources to fund a Grant PDF appointment, one faculty member must be designated as the Faculty Supervisor and there should be a formal agreement among all the funding partners about decision-making with respect to the PDF appointment. Normally, the Faculty Supervisor of a Grant PDF is the holder of the primary grant.

The precise terms of employment of PDFs whose compensation is derived both from external sources and from grants must be determined in advance by mutual agreement of the PDF and the Faculty Supervisor, consistent with the regulations of the all of the agencies providing the funding.

### **3. Terms and Conditions of Appointment**

#### **3.1 Responsibilities**

A Postdoctoral Fellow will be associated with one or more faculty members for the purpose of research collaboration. Each PDF is responsible to her/his Faculty Supervisor for the satisfactory performance of the research activities specified in the Appointment/Invitation Letter or, in the case of External PDFs, the application for a Fellowship; failure to perform satisfactorily constitutes cause for termination, irrespective of the source of funding.

PDFs are required to adhere to all applicable University Policies. These are available at <http://www.sfu.ca/policies/>. These include but are not limited to:

- Research Grant and Contracts R10.01
- Research Ethics R20.01
- Biosafety R20.02
- Treatment of Animals in Research and Teaching R20.03
- Radiological Safety R20.04
- Intellectual Property R30.01 and R30.02
- Integrity in Research R60.01
- Fair Use of Information Resources GP-24
- Smoking and Occupational Health and Safety GP-16 and GP17
- Harassment GP-18

It should be noted that under Policy R10.01, only faculty members are permitted to apply for and hold external research grants and contracts, so that PDFs are not normally eligible to apply for or hold these; exceptions require the approval of the Vice President, Research and will be considered when the term of the external grant or contract is no longer than the expected tenure of the PDF.

It is recognized that some PDFs may wish to obtain teaching experience. PDFs may be involved in undergraduate and graduate lecturing, laboratory instruction, tutorials, supervision of undergraduate projects, and assistance with the supervision of graduate students (with the exception of Senior Supervision). Arrangements to participate in such activities should be made with the Faculty Supervisor and the Chair of the Department; they must be consistent with relevant University Policies and Regulations and with contracts and other agreements with SFU employee groups. Chairs should determine in advance of making such an appointment whether there are any restrictions to the amount of teaching or other work that may be performed by an External PDF.

PDFs do not have voting privileges with respect to elections for members of Senate, the Board of Governors, or other University bodies. Departments may, under their own constitutions, make provision for participation of PDFs in Departmental governance.

#### **3.2 Compensation**

As noted above, PDFs may be funded by external sources or by payments from grants or contracts held by faculty members or by a combination of these sources.

Stipends payable to an External PDF are normally determined by the external agency. For current information, contact the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Where no specific stipend, salary or range thereof is mandated, the PDF's compensation is based on his/her relevant qualifications, experience and responsibilities and is subject to negotiation between the Faculty Supervisor and the PDF; however the minimum salary for a Grant PDF will normally be the minimum payable to postdoctoral fellows from NSERC grants under current NSERC regulations.

### **3.3 Employment Benefits**

Employment benefits are available only to Grant PDFs; required and optional benefits are described under "Procedures for a Research Grant Appointment," a supplement to SFU Policy R50.02. As noted in that Policy, hours of work, vacation, maternity and parental leave, and termination of employment for Grant PDFs are governed by the Employment Standards Act of B.C. Deductions from the PDF's salary are made for the employee's contribution to the Employment Insurance program, Income Tax and Canada Pension Plan. A clear description of the specific benefits offered to the Grant PDF should be in the Appointment Letter.

External PDFs are not eligible to receive employment benefits from SFU. They are required to make private arrangements for medical insurance coverage. No deductions are made from their stipends for Income Tax. PDFs should be aware that tax may be payable when a tax return is filed. These facts should be made clear in the Invitation Letter.

### **3.4 Orientation**

The Faculty Supervisor is primarily responsible for orienting the PDF to the Department, Faculty and University. This includes informing the PDF of Department and Faculty standards, performance expectations, hours of work, safety procedures/regulations, relevant University Policies and Procedures, and for orienting the PDF to the work site and overall University environment. The Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies will provide materials to assist in orientation and may provide annual or semesterly orientation sessions.

### **3.5 Access to Research Resources**

The Faculty Supervisor and Department Chair will make best efforts to provide resources needed to support the collaborative research activities. This will normally include office space, access to computing resources, local telephone service and (if relevant) laboratory space, equipment and supplies.

### **3.6 Achievement**

Publication of research results and development of patentable or licensable products are typical standards of achievement as a PDF. It is expected that PDFs will be appropriately recognized for their contributions to publications and patents and will appropriately recognize the contributions of others. It is the responsibility of the Faculty Supervisor, in consultation with the PDF, to develop and document a clear agreement about the rights and responsibilities of the parties, under the SFU policies on intellectual property, with the PDF at the start of the appointment; this may be part of the Letter of Appointment/Invitation or may comprise a separate document.

### **3.7 Access to University Services and Facilities**

It is the responsibility of the Faculty Supervisor to make the PDF aware of the University services and facilities available to PDFs; some of these are described in Appendix D to this Policy, which will be updated from time-to-time by the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

### **3.8 Reappointment**

At least one month prior to the expiration of the term of the appointment, the Faculty Supervisor should inform the PDF in writing whether or not the appointment will be extended and, in the case of extension of the appointment of Grant PDFs, also notify SFU Payroll of the extension.

## **4. Conflict Resolution**

In the event of disagreement between a PDF and his/her Faculty Supervisor concerning duties or responsibilities under the terms of this Policy, it will be the responsibility of the Department Chair to

encourage informal, amicable and prompt settlement of such disagreements. If this is unsuccessful, a Grant PDF may file a complaint under the B.C. Employment Standards Act; an External PDF should consult the Dean of Graduate Studies who will mediate the disagreement, either directly or through delegation.

## **5. Recruitment, Appointment/Invitation Procedures.**

### **5.1 Recruitment**

Faculty members may recruit PDFs by whatever method they deem appropriate, advertising in appropriate local, national or international journals, newspapers or electronic media, personal contacts or response to enquiries. When recruiting Grant PDFs, faculty members must adhere to SFU Policy R50.02 and all relevant legislation, such as the Human Rights Code of British Columbia and the Canada Immigration Act.

### **5.2 Offer of Appointment/Invitation**

Typically, an individual faculty member or group of faculty members may invite a PDF to become a research colleague; as noted above, one faculty member must be designated as the Faculty Supervisor. Simon Fraser University requires that an Appointment/Invitation Letter be sent by the prospective Faculty Supervisor to the prospective Grant PDF or External PDF; the letter must include:

- a. position title
- b. starting date and term of appointment
- c. remuneration (if not already specified by an external agency)
- d. statutory and additional employment benefits (for Grant PDFs)
- e. extent (if any) to which moving expenses will be reimbursed
- f. nature of the research to be undertaken
- g. any special conditions that may apply

Sample Appointment/Invitation Letters for Grant/External PDFs respectively are attached as Appendices B and C to this Policy respectively. These may be revised from time-to-time by the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies. A copy of this Policy should be enclosed with the Appointment/Invitation Letter. Since each appointment involves the use of Departmental resources, the Department Chair must agree explicitly in advance to the terms of the letter of Appointment/Invitation.

### **5.3 Acceptance**

The PDF will indicate acceptance of the appointment/invitation in writing by returning a signed copy of the Appointment/Invitation Letter

### **5.4 Finalization**

For all PDFs, the PDF and the Faculty Supervisor shall complete the SFU Postdoctoral Fellow Registration Form (see Appendix A, which may be changed from time-to-time by the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies) and submit it to the Chair of the appropriate Department for approval. The completed, approved form must be submitted to the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies for registration of the appointment; this will enable the PDF to gain access to a variety of University services.

For Grant PDFs, the Faculty Supervisor shall also forward a copy of the Appointment Letter to SFU Financial Services, Research and Awards. The Faculty Supervisor shall also forward a completed form FPP4 (Appointment Form, Research Grants) to the Financial Services, Research and Awards. This is necessary in order to enable the University to perform administrative services on behalf of the Faculty Supervisor.

## **6. Interpretation**

Questions of interpretation and application of this Policy or its procedures shall be referred to the Dean of Graduate Studies, whose decision shall be final.