

## Frequently Asked Questions - July 2019

**Q: What is Policy R50.03 and what are the changes?**

**A:** Policy R50.03 is a research policy governing the appointment of Postdoctoral Fellows (PDFs). Central to the policy change is the employment relationship of grant-funded PDFs. Under the previous version of the policy, PDFs served as employees of individual faculty members or principal investigators (PIs) rather than employees of SFU. The revisions, will see most grant-funded PDFs become employees of the University, supported by a policy that better defines the rights, roles and responsibilities of all parties. As employees of the university, eligible PDFs will qualify for benefits.

**Q: Does this policy cover any of the other research personnel?**

**A:** The policy only applies to Postdoctoral Fellows. As a smaller, more homogenous group, this group was chosen as a pilot to introduce the processes and procedures associated with these changes. Changes will be piloted with the principal investigators and PDFs and adjustments made as necessary.

**Q: Why was the 50.03 policy changed?**

**A:** The previous policy was outdated and in need of modernization. The new policy will:

- Demonstrate commitment to **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion**
- Recognize the valuable role and important contributions PDFs make to the University by recognizing most of them as employees, accompanied by the rights and benefits that accompany that status
- Reduce reputational risks to the university by providing support and expertise necessary for managing complex employment relationships
- Reduce personal risks to individual faculty members associated with being the employer and complying with BC and Federal laws

**Q: Who is responsible for the Policy?**

**A:** Responsibility for the policy resides with the Office of the Vice-President Research.

**Q: Do the R50.03 policy changes apply to all PDFs? Does this mean all PDFs will be employees and receive benefits?**

**A:** The policy applies to all Postdoctoral Fellows, faculty members and administrators at the University. It distinguishes between a PDF who is funded through a grant, contract or other funding mechanism which is held by either a faculty member or the University and a PDF who is funded through a fellowship provided by an external agency. These distinctions determine both the employment relationship and benefits eligibility.

*There are two appointment categories for PDFs:*

**Internal PDF:** A PDF whose salary is paid in whole or in part either from funds held by a University faculty member or from the University's financial resources or a combination of the two. An Internal PDF will be an employee of the University. As employees of the University, these PDFs will be eligible for benefits. Appointment letters generated after June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019 will reflect the changes in the R50.03 policy and will establish the employment relationship with the University. PDFs who have been previously appointed with their supervisor as their employer will be grandfathered from the previous policy.

**External PDF:** A PDF who has secured funding from an external funding organization or a fellowship program which is external to the University and whose salary is paid wholly from such funding. An external PDF is not an employee of the University. Benefits provided to External PDFs are subject to the rules of the funding agency and are provided at the discretion of their faculty supervisor.

**Q: Who is responsible for the Policy?**

A: Responsibility for the policy resides with the Office of the Vice-President Research.

**Q: What is the role of Faculty Relations?**

A: Faculty Relations will generate the employment packages, including appointment letters and benefit packages on behalf of the Principal Investigators / Supervisors and their departments. They will receive and process documents returned by the Postdoctoral Fellows for payroll and liaise with HR for administration activities.

**Q: What is the role of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies?**

A: Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies will continue to support networking and professional development opportunities for postdoctoral fellows, provide guidance on university administered postdoctoral fellowships and advocate on behalf of postdoctoral fellows.

**Q: What benefits will PDF's be eligible for?**

A: Eligible PDFs will qualify for the following benefits:

- BC Medical Services Plan (until December 31, 2019)
- extended health
- dental
- maternity/parental leave top up

**Q: Who will pay for the benefits?**

A: The Faculty Member's funding source will be required to fund benefits. It has been recognized that existing grants may not have enough funds to absorb the costs. For grants already in place, where there are not funds available to cover the costs of the additional benefits, a temporary bridge fund will be in place. Premiums for benefits will not be deducted from the PDFs income.

**Q: Will I be charged a premium for benefits?**

A: Benefits are 100% paid by the institution. No premiums will be charged to the PDF.

**Q: Will all eligible PDFs receive benefits immediately?**

A: Generally, PDFs will continue their employment under the terms and conditions of their existing appointment letters and will not automatically qualify for benefits. It has been recognized however that there are a number of current appointments which will either be extended to include an additional appointment, or that have a significant amount of time left on their currently appointment. Each situation will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. More information will be provided on this in the near future.

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**Q: What is the process for enrolling in benefits and when can existing PDFs enroll?**

**A:** The team is currently working on transitioning the existing PDF's to the new policy and assessing benefits eligibility. More information will be available in the next couple of weeks.

All eligible PDFs will be sent individual packages with instructions on how to enroll.

**Q: What is bridge funding?**

**A:** Bridge funding is a temporary fund that has been set up to cover the incremental costs of benefits associated with this policy change where an existing grant may not have enough funds to absorb the cost. The fund will be in place for up to five years.

**Q: Will the bridge fund cover the increased costs automatically?**

The principal investigator must apply for funds to cover the increased cost of these benefits. Bridge funding only covers the incremental cost increase associated with extended health and dental. This process is currently under development.

All new grant applications must budget for the full cost of benefits, **excluding** maternity and parental leave. When bridge funding is no longer in place, maternity and parental leave will continue be covered by the university where there are no other mechanisms available through the grant or granting agency to fund the leave.

**Q: How do I apply for bridge funding?**

**A:** This process is currently under development and will be available soon. Stay tuned.

**Q: What is the expected increased cost to the grant to fund benefits?**

**A:** The increased cost of the benefits is expected to be approximately 4%. This is on top of 8% already being included for WCB, Canada Pension, and EI as well as the upcoming 2% increase for MSP in January.

The total cost of benefits is estimated at 14%.

**Q: What percentage cost of benefits should be used in grant funding proposals for PDFs moving forward?**

**A:** Moving forward the percentage cost of benefits for PDFs to use for grant funding proposals is 14%.

**Q: I have a new PDF I want to hire/re-appoint. What do I do?**

**A:** Processes are currently being developed, tested and refined.

Until these are complete, to process a new, or re-appointed PDF contact:

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As we work through the processes, we will be asking for feedback to make improvements. We thank you in advance for any assistance you can provide.

We'll provide updated communication, materials and web links as we finalize the processes.

**Q: Can I provide the PDF with the appointment letter?**

A: Faculty Relations will be responsible for issuing the appointment / invitation letters on behalf of SFU. The appointment/invitation letters are legal documents that form the employment contract between SFU and the PDF. If you have a specific situation or question, please contact Faculty Relations