

## Top 6 PDA Asks to improve postdoc experience at SFU

Based on the postdoc survey conducted in late 2021, the SFU Postdoctoral Association (PDA) has identified 6 areas for improving postdoc experience to be considered by the University Administration, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, and Faculty Relations. Below, we list concrete suggestions that will make an immediate impact on the working and living conditions of Postdoctoral Fellows.

SFU PDA Executive Committee, May 2022

### **1. Postdoc medical benefits**

- a. Increase benefit plan offerings (possibly by joining other non-union plans on campus) so that they match the benefits offered to comparable positions in the Vancouver metro area. Suggested benefit increases, based on the coverage UBC postdocs receive, include:
  - i. Vision coverage: Cover 100% of costs (up to a maximum of \$400 in any 24 month period) associated with contact lenses, eyeglasses, prescription sunglasses, or laser eye correction surgery.
  - ii. Dental coverage: Cover 100% of costs for basic services, 70% of costs for major services, and 65% of costs for orthodontics (up to a lifetime cost of \$3000 for orthodontics). Add orthodontic coverage to all policyholders, not just child dependents. Provide \$1500 per dental implant. Remove/increase limit for received X-rays.
  - iii. Paramedical services: Cover 80% of costs after the deductible is paid (up to a maximum of \$600) for osteopathic practitioners, acupuncturists, chiropractors, naturopaths, homeopaths, audiologists, dieticians, occupational therapists, physical therapists, podiatrists, or chiropodists. Remove \$10 maximum visit max from all practitioners that currently have it in place.
  - iv. Drug coverage: Cover all forms of contraception
  - v. Mental health coverage: Cover 100% of costs after the deductible is paid (up to a maximum of \$2500/year) for registered/licensed clinical psychologists, registered/licensed social workers, or clinical counsellors.
  - vi. Sick leave: Increase available sick leave days (currently only 5 days per annum provided)

### **2. More flexibility for internal and external postdocs**

- a. Establish an option for external postdocs to become university employees and get access to benefits. Expenses could be deducted from salary.
- b. Establish a flexible, standardized procedure to deal with internal postdocs who obtain external awards. Postdocs who win external awards should not necessarily lose their benefits. Can postdocs be provided with a choice of how their award affects their internal FTE position?

**3. Housing options for incoming postdocs**

- a. Provide short-term (~1 month) “guest house” spaces that incoming postdocs (and their families) can rent while searching for longer term housing
- b. Allow postdocs to participate in existing housing programs (e.g. in family housing)

**4. Teaching options for postdocs**

- a. Modify postdoc contracts so that teaching (including, but not limited to TA, sessional, and limited-term positions) is an optional responsibility that postdocs may pursue.
- b. In the bargaining contract with TSSU, advocate for a carve out that allows for postdocs to teach

**5. Conflict resolution options**

- a. Offer alternative routes for postdoc/supervisor conflict resolution. Currently the only option (described in R50.03, Procedure 8) is for postdocs to escalate their dispute: first to their supervisor, then to their department chair/director, then to the GPS dean, and finally to the VPRI. Alternative routes could run through the Ombudsperson (who currently says their mandate does not extend to postdocs), or through the newly-appointed case manager within GPS. The different avenues for conflict resolution should be advertised to postdocs.

**6. Standardization of contract language**

- a. Provide potential postdoc supervisors and the PDA with a sample postdoc contract with standardized language that guides the initial employment negotiation between supervisor and postdoc. In this contract, make the negotiating room transparent to new hires and their supervisors.