

## **GUIDELINES FOR POSTDOCTORAL POSITIONS AT VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY**

**General** - Villanova University adopts the National Postdoctoral Association definition of a Postdoctoral Scholar as “an individual holding a doctoral degree who is engaged in a temporary period of mentored research and/or scholarly training for the purpose of acquiring the professional skills needed to pursue a career path of their choosing.” Postdoctoral appointments provide opportunities for recent advanced degree recipients to extend their professional training and education in preparation for a career in research, teaching, discipline-specific professions, and/or academia. Postdoctoral appointments have a maximum duration of five years, although Villanova reserves the right to limit the duration of the appointment. Extending employment of an individual holding a postdoctoral appointment beyond the five-year maximum requires transitioning to a more appropriate, non-training title, such as Senior Research Associate, Assistant Research Professor, or Assistant Teaching Professor.

Postdoctoral appointments at Villanova are full-time, 9 to 12 month, fixed-term, benefits eligible, exempt positions. Several key criteria apply to Postdoctoral Scholar appointments:

- The appointee must have been awarded a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate in an appropriate field, within five years prior to initial appointment.
- The appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time academic, research, or professional career.
- The appointee works under the mentorship of a faculty member(s), guided by a formalized Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan.
- Active mentoring is a hallmark of a successful Postdoctoral Scholar experience. Depending on the program or discipline, the mentor may be a single identified faculty member, or several faculty members within the department/disciplinary area. A formalized Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan should be prepared and shared with the scholar prior to employment, if possible, and in all cases, revised as appropriate within the first 30 days of appointment.
- Postdoctoral scholars should be evaluated annually, with evaluation aligned to the Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan. Annual evaluation should be completed through the appropriate college/department faculty evaluation process in consultation with the mentor(s).
- Postdoctoral positions are not intended to be a pipeline for recent PhDs to become adjuncts or to serve in solely teaching roles at the University. If a position is primarily teaching, a more appropriate role should be selected such as continuing non-tenure track, visiting assistant professor, or adjunct.
- Postdoctoral positions have a scholarly training / research component, with appropriate expectations set for scholarly achievement during the postdoctoral term. These expectations will vary by discipline but could include journal publications, sponsored award applications, book chapters, conference presentations, etc. Other examples are included in the Sample Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan document.
- The appointment is a temporary traineeship, with a typical duration of no more than four years. Under special circumstances, and with advance approval by the Provost’s Office, Postdoctoral Scholar appointments may be extended for no more than one additional year. The maximum tenure of a Postdoctoral Scholar is five years.
- Part time or short-term appointments (< 1 year), whether compensated or non-compensated, may not be appointed as Postdoctoral Scholars.

## Types of Postdoctoral Scholars

There are mainly two different models of Postdoctoral Scholars at Villanova. **Research focused** Postdoctoral Scholars participate in research/scholarly training under the mentorship of an identified faculty member(s). These positions are often paid through extramural funding but could also be funded internally or through a combination of sources. Teaching may be an added component of a scholar's workload, but generally would not exceed a 1-1 teaching load. **Research/teaching balanced** Postdoctoral Scholars participate in research/scholarly training under the mentorship of an identified faculty member(s). These positions have a larger teaching requirement, with teaching loads ranging from 2-2 to 3-3, depending in part on research expectations and program requirements. In both cases a Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan will be in place for the scholar, which outlines expectations for research, teaching and service (if applicable) as well as professional development needs. The differentiation between the two models of post-doctoral scholars is not reflected in appointment titles. The distinction is made for internal program planning purposes and to set general expectations for teaching loads that align with research expectations and program requirements. The Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan should thoughtfully reflect the relative balance of teaching, research, and service expectations (if any are applicable) for the various postdoctoral programs at Villanova.

## Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan

A good mentor-mentee relationship is reciprocal and characterized by mutual respect and an understanding of each individual's expectations. A mentor should be approachable, available, and willing to share knowledge; listen and communicate effectively; provide encouragement and constructive criticism; and offer expertise and guidance. Similarly, the mentee should be approachable, available, and willing to offer ideas and solutions; listen and communicate effectively; be open to constructive criticism; and seek and respond to expert guidance.

To formalize expectations, the Mentor(s) is required to prepare a written Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan. Key expectations should be shared with the scholar prior to employment (research expectations, teaching load, service expectations if appropriate, etc.) and a formal Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan should be finalized within the first 30 days of appointment. The Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan will clearly communicate the goals, objectives, and expectations, as well as the anticipated development activities along with research projects or teaching goals, of the scholar. The plan must clearly outline the frequency and nature of discussions between the mentor and the scholar regarding their research/teaching activities and progress, as well as overall career development. The plan should appropriately reflect the relative balance of teaching and research, aligned with the postdoctoral scholar's teaching load and expectations. If more than one faculty member will be mentoring the Postdoctoral Scholar, the roles and responsibilities of each mentor should be clearly delineated within the Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan.

The Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan should include expectations for maintaining accurate records of teaching and research/scholarly work as well as a strategy for the scholar to enhance their professional skills and research and teaching independence needed to pursue their chosen career path. After hire and revision of the plan with the Postdoctoral Scholar's input, the final version of the plan should be submitted to [virs@villanova.edu](mailto:virs@villanova.edu) within 60 days of onboarding of a new Postdoctoral Scholar. These plans will be used by VIRS [and collaborators e.g., VITAL] to inform professional development topics for a university wide post-doctoral network.

### **Expectations of Postdoctoral Scholars**

In order to be successful, Postdoctoral Scholars have a set of core expectations that include the following:

- A. Conscientious, satisfactory, and complete performance of assigned duties.
- B. Adherence to all ethical standards and good research and/or professional practice. This includes seeking guidance when presented with uncertainties and reporting on breaches of ethical or compliance standards.
- C. Depending on the nature of the Postdoctoral appointment, additional training may be required related to: Human or Animal subjects, Conflicts of Interest, and Responsible Conduct of Research as well as other mandatory training programs as defined by the University.
- D. Open and timely discussions with their Mentor(s) regarding research and teaching activities and progress. The frequency and nature of these discussions are to be outlined in the Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan but should occur no less than once per semester.
- E. Collegial conduct towards their Mentor(s), coworkers, students, staff and other individuals with whom the Postdoctoral Scholar interacts, including contributing to an environment that is safe, equitable and free of harassment.
- F. Compliance with all University policies and procedures.

### **Expectations of Faculty Mentors**

Established faculty mentors are responsible for providing advice, guidance, and assistance to their postdoctoral scholar with a goal of maximizing their training, education, and professional development experience to prepare them for an independent career. Tools and support should be provided in the form of training, mentorship, as well as related departmental and institutional resources. Toward this end, mentors have the following expectations:

- A. Foster the scholar's training and professional development, enhancing the scholar's knowledge and technical skills as appropriate to the current postdoctoral appointment and anticipated career goals.
- B. Provide counsel with respect to the temporal progress of research/scholarship activities such that they are likely to lead to presentation, publication, or other appropriate dissemination in a timely fashion.
- C. With support as needed from the department chair or college dean, ensure an appropriate level of funding to support the research/scholarship of the scholar for the period specified.
- D. Work with the scholar to identify sources of external funding and training in proposal preparation, if appropriate. In certain instances, Postdoctoral Scholars may receive permission to serve as Principal Investigator or Co-Principal Investigator on proposals for external funding.
- E. Work with the scholar to develop skills in oral presentations, manuscript preparation, and/or grant-writing as appropriate for the discipline.
- F. Conduct an annual performance review of the postdoctoral scholar.
- G. Collegial conduct toward Postdoctoral Scholars is expected of mentors, including contributing to an environment that is safe, equitable and free of harassment.

## Parental Leave

Postdoctoral scholars are full-time, exempt positions with parental leave benefits consistent with the faculty Family (Parental/Adoption) Leave policy. As such, postdoctoral scholars qualify for up to 15 weeks (the equivalent of one semester) of paid parental leave in order to care for a newborn child, the adoption of a child, or placement of a foster child. All requests for leave must be made in writing and in accordance with University procedures. If the timing of the request requires leave for a partial semester, the postdoctoral scholar should work with the department chair, college dean, and Office of the Provost to develop an alternate work plan to ensure any teaching accommodations do not negatively impact the student experience or consistency in program course offerings. This could be achieved, for example, through team-teaching approaches, staggered semester teaching loads, or developing alternate work assignments as appropriate for the discipline. The maximum time of a postdoctoral scholar's appointment can be extended to account for any parental leave that has been taken.

## Postdoctoral Scholar Appointment Process

Please refer to the Office of the Provost's Faculty Recruitment Guidelines and Policies for an overview of the faculty hiring process. It is important that hiring managers ensure that job descriptions and hiring advertisements appropriately reflect the role of the postdoctoral scholar, including appropriate titles.

Recruitment of Postdoctoral Scholars is managed by the department and/or the college dean, who receive authorization from the Provost (or Provost's designee). The department prepares the position description and advertisements, subject to the dean's approval; normally conducts the search, including rigorous efforts to recruit a diverse applicant pool especially able to contribute to the University's mission and values; and makes its recommendation to the dean, who, in turn, recommends the appointment to the Provost (or Provost's designee). The Provost (or Provost's designee) then approves the appointment, allowing the dean, department chair, or mentor to extend the offer. Upon acceptance, the Office of the Provost will send the formal letter of appointment.

The recruitment process is managed via Villanova's web-based PeopleAdmin system, which provides to both applicants and to internal reviewers all relevant information on an ongoing basis.

Typically the term of appointment is described as one year renewable up to a total of four years at the University's sole discretion.

Postdoctoral Scholars should be onboarded with the title of "Postdoctoral Scholar" followed by an indication of the program they are associated with. A list of approved Banner titles are included below:

- Postdoctoral Scholar-Ennis
- Postdoctoral Scholar-Barbieri
- Postdoctoral Scholar-Siena
- Postdoctoral Scholar-MSE
- Postdoctoral Scholar-CLAS/COE/FCON/VSB/CWSL/CPS (choose appropriate college; should be used for all postdoctoral scholars not associated with a named program, regardless of source(s) of funding)

## **Annual Review**

To provide an excellent training and mentoring environment for Villanova postdoctoral scholars, scholars should receive regular feedback from their mentor(s) in order to grow professionally and benefit from praise as well as critique. While this feedback should occur at regular intervals during the Postdoctoral Scholar's appointment, at a minimum, formalized annual performance reviews should be conducted. Evaluations should be completed using the faculty evaluation process and guidelines relevant to the particular Postdoctoral Program and college/department. If this process includes evaluation by e.g. a Department Chair or Dean, the input of the scholar's mentor should be explicitly included in the evaluation materials.

The annual review also provides an important opportunity for the scholar and mentor to review the postdoctoral mentoring plan and the progress made. This is needed to ensure that the expectations of both parties are being met and that appropriate modifications of the plan or the approach to the plan are made.

## **Appointment Changes: Reappointment & Termination**

Changes to existing appointments, including renewal, resignation/separation, or change in terms should be submitted to the Office of the Provost on the Faculty Personnel Action Form (Faculty PAF), available through the college dean's office.

Postdoctoral scholar appointment terms will be issued by the Provost office to the postdoctoral scholar, copying the mentor, department chair and college dean. Mentors requesting an extension or renewal of appointment term must communicate plans to the college dean's office for renewal, including funding sources, at least three months in advance to avoid any pay/benefit interruption. Letters of reappointment will be issued by the Office of the Provost prior to the end of the current appointment term.

Where possible, it is preferable to align the appointment with the faculty contract year, beginning August 22nd. Unless explicitly noted otherwise, the postdoctoral scholar appointment will terminate on the end date in the appointment letter.

*Contributors to these guidelines include: Office of the Provost; College Deans; College Research Assoc. Deans; Ennis, Barbieri, Siena, and MSE postdoctoral program directors; Villanova Institute for Research and Scholarship; Villanova Institute for Teaching and Learning; Office of Grants and Contracts; Office of General Counsel; Research Policy Committee.*

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