5.10.1 Converting to Postdoctoral Status: Policy

Summary

Defines postdoctoral scholars as advanced trainees, classified by Stanford as nonmatriculated graduate students in residence at Stanford for a period of time beyond the completion of the doctoral degree. Describes the process for appointing graduating Stanford doctoral students as postdoctoral scholars.

Rationale

Stanford’s academic and research community is enriched by the presence of postdoctoral researchers appointed for a period of time both to advance their own professional development and to contribute to ongoing research at Stanford. Postdoctoral scholars (postdocs) are appointed to a role that is defined at Stanford within the category of advanced nonmatriculated graduate students.

Policies and procedures related to the appointment of postdoctoral scholars at Stanford University are available from the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs[1] web site. The purpose of this policy is to describe particular aspects of those policies as they relate to the postdoctoral appointment of graduating Stanford doctoral students.

Authority:

- University Provost (policy)
- Office of Postdoctoral Affairs[2], and Office of the Registrar[3] via HelpSU (implementation)

Applicability:

To graduating Stanford doctoral students and to the programs in which they are appointed as Postdoctoral Scholars.

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1. Definition

Postdoctoral scholars are trainees in residence at Stanford University pursuing advanced studies beyond the doctoral level in preparation for an independent career. Postdoctoral scholars are appointed for a limited period of
time and may participate in Stanford research projects and/or may be supported by external awards or fellowships.
In all cases, their appointment at Stanford is for the purpose of advanced studies and training under the sponsorship of a Stanford faculty member.

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2. Eligibility for Appointment

Postdoctoral appointments require initial full-time engagement in the designated research or study and are generally restricted to those who have earned a terminal degree such as Ph.D. or J.D. within the last three years or a medical degree such as M.D., M.B.B.S., or D.D.S. within the last six years.

Stanford University doctoral students are eligible for potential appointment as postdoctoral scholars upon the conferral of their Ph.D. degree, or with a letter from the Stanford Office of the Registrar verifying completion of all requirements and confirming the date of degree conferral.

**Postdoctoral Appointments after Degree Conferral**

As evidence of degree conferral, a copy of the scholar’s diploma is required. If the scholar has more than one doctoral degree (i.e., M.D. and Ph.D.), the diploma pertinent to research study is necessary for admission as a scholar; copies of both are preferred.

**Postdoctoral Appointments prior to Degree Conferral**

In some instances, a scholar may not yet have their final degree conferred, but has completed all the requirements for a doctoral degree. In these cases, a letter may be accepted from the scholar’s institution (Registrar’s Office or equivalent is required) stating the date the scholar completed ALL the requirements, including submission and acceptance, defense of thesis, and the date the degree is to be conferred. The Office of Postdoctoral Services must receive a copy of the diploma when it is available.

In the case of doctoral students at Stanford University who have completed all requirements for conferral of the doctoral degree, this letter of completion must be from the Office of the Registrar.

Sample letters for this purpose are provided on the [Postdoctoral Affairs web site](#). [1]

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3. Length of Appointment

The initial appointment of postdoctoral scholars is expected to be for one year on a full-time (100% FTE) basis. An exception to permit less than a one-year appointment may be permitted for a Stanford graduate who is transitioning to another appointment or position. Although such transitional appointments may be made for less than one year, the appointment must be full-time during the duration of the appointment.

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**Related Content:**

**Related Policies**
- GAP 5.11, [Postdoctoral Scholars in Degree Programs](#) [4]
- [Postdoctoral Scholars](#), Research Policy Handbook
Related Bulletin Sections

- **Postdoctoral Scholars** [6]

Related Information and Forms

- **Office of Postdoctoral Affairs** [1]
- **Postdoc Forms web page** [7]
- **Postdoc Appointment Checklist** [8]
- **Bechtel International Center** [9]

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