



# UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

## POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWS

### POLICY DOCUMENT

#### Policies Governing Postdoctoral Research Fellows at the University of Cape Town

##### 1. Purpose

To describe terms and conditions for the award of the fellowship, tenure activities and termination of Postdoctoral Research Fellows (PDRFs) at the University of Cape Town.

##### 2. Definition

*Postdoctoral Research Fellowships are normally awarded to individuals within five years of having achieved a doctoral degree. **Postdoctoral Research Fellows are individuals who undertake research and gain professional experience for a future academic career, under the supervision and mentorship of a Principal Investigator.** Fellowships are negotiable up to 3 years after which extension of tenure may, under exceptional circumstances, be considered for up to a maximum of five years. A sixth year of registration cannot be considered. The purpose of the Postdoctoral Research Fellowship is to provide an opportunity for experiential learning in research, which may serve as a path for further academic and professional development.*

“Department” refers to the academic department which has undertaken to host the PDRF.

“Head of Department” (HoD) refers to the head of department.

“Fellowship” is the grant of money or stipend to support the PDRF. Fellowships are provided from different sources.

“Conditions-of-Award” refers to the conditions of the fellowship concerned.

“Memorandum of Agreement” (MoA) is the agreement between the University and the PDRF, defining the relationship between them.

“Memorandum of Understand” (MoU) is the agreement between the HoD and the PI on the one hand and the PDRF on the other defining the expectations of each by the other.

“PFO” is the Postgraduate Funding Office, charged with responsibility of administering Postdoctoral Research Fellowships and ensuring that appointments, tenures, activities and terminations comply with these policies and that the terms of individual Memoranda of Agreement are complied with.

“PI” refers to the Principal Investigator or Supervisor.

### 3. Background

PDRFs are highly productive and valuable members of the University's academic community. They make a substantial contribution. Postdoctoral Fellows who have been accepted by an academic department and who are supported by a postdoctoral fellowship may be registered at UCT under the following conditions:

1. Compliance with the University's official DEFINITION, specifically in that the prospective Postdoctoral Fellow has achieved her/his PhD degree within 5 years of such registration, and
2. On condition that the prospective Postdoctoral Fellow has not previously held any professional or permanent academic positions.

Each PDRF is managed by a PI and the Head of Department, and will usually join an established research-group. PDRFs will usually undertake limited teaching and/or supervision of students.

The value derived from postdoctoral training and the broader experience is beneficial to both the University and the country. UCT needs to consolidate Postdoctoral Research Fellows in support of its research enterprise and to assist with achievement of national, institutional and equity goals.

### 4. Advertising, Selection and Award

PDRFs are individuals who must have achieved a Doctoral degree within five years of being appointed, who have not yet established an academic career, and who wish to train further in specialised research.

The University as a matter of policy will advertise all opportunities for fellowships, so that free and fair competition is ensured. All advertisements must take into account the formal and approved Definition and comply with the approved Advertising Guidelines for Postdoctoral Fellowships.

Selection and recruitment of applicants can be done at Faculty, Department or URC level, (by committees authorised to select such candidates). **In all cases, such selection must take account of the approved Definition and Policy Document to ensure that the prospective PDRF is compliant.**

Postdoctoral Research Fellowships are held in terms of the standard Memorandum of Agreement. Departments must provide equipment and resources necessary to enable the PDRF to effectively carry out her/his research work. These must be documented in the MoU. The Department must provide an environment where training and learning will take place and where ongoing mentorship/supervision is ensured.

### 5. Conditions of Award

All PDRF awards are governed by specific and approved Conditions-of-Award. Such conditions provide a framework for the research/study to be undertaken and the basic conditions under which the PDRF is registered. .

### 6 Position, Amenities and Facilities

A PDRF is not a student, nor an employee, but is **an academic and professional trainee**, known as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow. The Fellowships given to PDRFs provide no fringe-benefits and the PDRF is not required to provide any service in return for the Fellowship value. The PDRF should be given adequate working space, equipment and basic amenities, and be eligible to apply for the following:

- ❖ Library borrowing Facilities.
- ❖ Parking facilities
- ❖ Membership of the Sports and other clubs

- ❖ Student Health Services
- ❖ Edu-care and related services
- ❖ Student and/or staff-housing

## **7. Contracts - Memoranda of Understanding/Agreement**

The PDRF must enter into a legally-binding Memorandum of Agreement with the University of Cape Town, and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Faculty/Host-Department.

Such agreements will protect both parties and provide recourse to both parties in the event of a dispute or complaint.

The MoA will ensure compliance with the University's code of conduct, policies and conditions.

The MoU is a bi-lateral agreement between the Postdoctoral Fellow and the Principal Investigator, and provides a framework for the work to be done and a means of monitoring the agreed-upon expectations of both parties.

## **8. Induction/Orientation**

The PFO will provide the entering PDRF with information packs on the University of Cape Town and the geography of its precincts, guidance to accessing the amenities and facilities available and ongoing service and advice. It will also provide support for any representative group formed by the PDRFs.

The HoD or PI will provide the new PDRF with an orientation to the department, and its facilities/amenities, and introduction to the Dean of the Faculty.

## **9. Funding**

PDRF awards are funded from a variety of sources. Each will have specific conditions which must be approved by the Chair of the University Research Committee. In all cases, Fellowship-funding will be administered by the PFO. All individual requests for tax directives will be made to the SARS by the PFO on behalf of the PDRF. An agreed-upon amount of the Fellowship will be paid to the PDRF on registration and on completion of the MoA). The balance of the Fellowship will be released to the PDRF at agreed-upon intervals during the year.

After receipt of the Fellowship, any balance on the University-account of the PDRF will be the sole responsibility of that PDRF and the University will not take responsibility for offsetting any outstanding balance at the end of tenure.

Postdoctoral Fellows and/or Principal Investigators are required to inform the PFO when a Postdoctoral Fellow terminates his/her tenure at the university. Where such termination occurs before the Postdoctoral Fellow has completed her/his research and/or full tenure, the University reserves the right to recover all or some of the funds that have been paid to the Postdoctoral Fellow in advance.

## **10. Activities**

The academic activities of the PDRF will be described in the Conditions-of-Award and the Memorandum of Understanding. The PDRF will not be required to provide any service in return for the Fellowship-value, and the limited teaching, lecturing, supervision or other work that is integral to the training of the PDRF must be fully recorded in the MoU. The MoU will be used as informal terms-of-reference and/or a guide to resolve any disputes arising between the Department and the PDRF.

## **11. Code of Conduct and Grievance Procedures and Complaints**

The PDRF must subscribe to the University's code of conduct and policies. In the event of any dispute, the PDRF will have recourse to a specific Grievance Procedure and will have right of representation in any hearing that may result from a dispute or serious complaint.

## **12. Tenure**

Each PDR Fellowship is awarded for one year only. Fellowships are negotiable up to 3 years after which extension of tenure may, under exceptional circumstances, be considered for up to a maximum of 5 years. A sixth year of registration cannot be considered.

PDRFs are not permitted to register for any degree whilst registered as Postdoctoral Fellows at UCT, nor are they permitted to be employed full-time by any party within or outside of the University. Work in the form of consultancies may be permitted with the express agreement of the HoD and the Dean of Faculty, who will act as the monitoring agents of such consultancy, and be subject to limitations on hours of work and income derived.

## **13. Professional Development**

Because a PDRF is essentially a trainee, the Conditions of Award and the MoU must describe the kind of training and work to be done by both the PDRF and the Department. In addition to this, the University may, from time-to-time provide professional development courses and seminars to assist the PDRFs. The PDRFs may organise seminars and training-courses amongst themselves or for senior students in their specific areas of research, and such events will be hosted and accommodated by the Postgraduate Centre of the University of Cape Town.

## **14. Termination.**

A PDRF's tenure terminates at the end of the specified period, unless renewal as outlined in No. 12 has been approved by the University of Cape Town.

## **15. Termination for cause**

The registration of a Postdoctoral Fellow may be cancelled at any time due to a material breach of contract and following a hearing, or on disciplinary grounds.

**Approved by Senate and Council of the University of Cape Town in July 2004**