

POLICY 7.6 – Guidelines for Postdoctoral Fellows and Postdoctoral Associates

Policy Category: Research

Effective Date: April 28, 2022

Supersedes: September 30, 2008; January 26, 1995

A: **PREAMBLE**

Postdoctoral Fellows (PDFs) and Postdoctoral Associates (PDAs) are valued members of the University community. As trained researchers making the transition from graduate student to independent scholar, they have the opportunity to make significant contributions to the research environment of the University as well as their chosen fields.

B: **DEFINITION**

The University defines a PDF or PDA as an individual who meets the following criteria:

1. the individual has received their doctoral degree within five years;
2. the individual holds a postdoctoral appointment that is time limited, for a period of up to four years (i.e., counted from the first appointment at Western), with the possibility of a one-year renewal (for a maximum length of 5 years);
3. the appointment involves full-time research, scholarship, and creative activity;
4. the individual is encouraged and expected to publish and disseminate their research during the period of the appointment; and
5. the individual will work independently in association with a faculty mentor.

There above-noted time periods may be extended if an individual's career was interrupted due to extenuating circumstances (e.g. parental leave and/or responsibilities, illness, health-related family responsibilities, military service, civil

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conflicts and/or natural disasters in the country of residence, or socioeconomic factors) or in cases where the individual is awarded external postdoctoral funding. It is otherwise the expectation of the University that all individuals who do not meet the definition of PDF or PDA will be appointed as Research Associates.

C: TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The appointment of a PDF or PDA is time-limited and not ongoing. Generally, PDFs and PDAs are appointed for term of one to four years, with the possibility of a one-year renewal. The documentation setting out the specific terms and conditions of engagement for PDFs and PDAs will be reviewed with the individual prior to the commencement of their appointment.

PDFs are not employees of the University, but rather individuals who contract with the University to obtain specialized training and contribute to the University's scholarship and research mission through the use of University facilities and other developmental opportunities. As a PDF is providing their services as an independent contractor and not as an employee, they are responsible for all personal tax obligations. Any stipend provided to the PDF and administered through the University's payroll system will be without statutory deduction for income tax, Canada Pension Plan, Employment Insurance or similar deductions or remittances. PDFs are not entitled to any benefits which the University may extend to its employees.

PDAs are employees of the University and will be required to enter into an employment contract prior to the commencement of their appointment. Any stipend provided to the PDA will be administered through the University's payroll system and will be subject to statutory deductions for income tax, Canada Pension Plan, Employment Insurance or similar deductions or remittances. However, PDAs have a benefit plan that differs from other employees.

Administrative procedures for the appointment of PDFs and PDAs are set by the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) in conjunction with Human Resources.

As members of the University community, PDFs and PDAs are expected to adhere to all applicable University policies.

In the event of a problem related to their appointment that requires resolution, it is expected that the PDF or PDA will arrange an informal discussion of the matter with the faculty mentor as soon as possible following the identification of the problem. In most instances, the concerns will be resolved at this juncture. If the problem remains unresolved, PDFs or PDAs are encouraged to request a meeting with the Department Chair, School Director or Faculty Dean. If resolution is not possible through these interventions, any of the affected parties may request

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assistance from the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) or designate in reaching a resolution. Any decisions of the Department, Chair, School Director, Faculty Dean and/or Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) shall be timely and in writing. At the request of any participants, assistance from Human Resources may be obtained at any point in the process.