

## Compact Between Postdoctoral Scholars and Their Mentors

Postdoctoral Scholars join an institution to advance their training in a chosen discipline after obtaining their terminal degree. This training, which should be for a *defined period*, is conducted under the supervision of one or more investigators who will fulfill the responsibilities of a research advisor and mentor. In addition to the primary responsibility of conducting research, the postdoctoral appointee may also undertake leadership, service, and teaching activities that together provide training experience essential for professional development and career advancement.

This compact serve both as a pledge and a reminder to Postdoctoral Scholars and their Faculty mentors that their conduct in fulfilling their commitments to one another should reflect the highest professional standards and mutual respect.

### Responsibilities of Postdoctoral Scholars

**I acknowledge that I have the primary responsibility for the development of my own career.** I recognize that I must take a realistic look at career opportunities and follow a path that matches my individual skills, values, and interests. I understand that on-line IDPs can be used as a starting point to help me define my career goals.

**I understand that it is my responsibility to develop a mutually defined research project with my mentor that includes well-defined goals and timelines.** The research project should be outlined and agreed upon at the time of the initial appointment.

**I will perform my research activities conscientiously, maintain accurate research notebooks, and catalog and store all tangible research materials that result from the research project.** I will maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, engagement, scientific curiosity, and ethical standards.

**I will endeavor to assume progressive responsibility and management of my research project(s) as it matures.** I recognize that assuming responsibility for the conduct of research projects is a critical step on the path to independence. I will meet regularly with my research advisor and provide them with updates on the progress and results of my activities and experiments. I will be responsive to the advice and constructive criticism from my advisor.

**I will respect all ethical standards when conducting my research including compliance with all institutional and federal regulations as they relate to responsible conduct in research or possible conflict of interest, e.g. authorship, data ownership and peer-review guidelines; laboratory safety; animal care and use; privacy and human subjects research.** I recognize that this commitment includes asking for guidance when presented with ethical/compliance uncertainties and reporting on breeches of ethical/compliance standards by me and/or others. I will participate in the Responsible Conduct of Research Training Program (mandatory at TAMU) and practice those guidelines in conducting my research.

**I will have open and timely discussions with my mentor concerning intellectual property rights, authorship and dissemination of research findings, distribution of research materials to third parties, and submission of research results for publication in a timely manner.**

**With respect to data ownership, I acknowledge that original notebooks, digital files, and tangible research materials belong to the institution and will remain in the lab when I finish my appointment, in accordance with institutional policy.** I will maintain a detailed, organized, and accurate laboratory notebook. Only with explicit approval from my research advisor and in accordance with institutional policy may I make copies of my notebooks and digital files and have access to tangible research materials that I helped to generate during my postdoctoral appointment.

**I will show respect for and will work collegially with my coworkers, support staff, students, and other individuals with whom I interact or mentor/supervise.** I will be an active, contributing member to all team efforts and collaborations and will respect individual contributions. I will be a good lab citizen. I will agree to take part in shared laboratory responsibilities and will use laboratory resources carefully. I will maintain a safe and clean laboratory space. I will discuss policies on work hours, sick leave and vacation with my research advisor. I will consult with my advisor and notify fellow lab members in advance of any planned absences.

**I recognize that I have embarked on a career requiring “lifelong learning”.** To meet this obligation, I must stay abreast of the latest developments in my specialized field through reading the literature, regular attendance of relevant seminar series, and attendance at scholarly meetings.





**I will actively seek opportunities outside my research project (e.g., professional/career development workshops, scientific writing, teaching when possible) to develop the set of professional skills necessary to be successful for my chosen career.** I will consult with my research advisor about integrating these activities into my work routine without affecting the progress of my research.

**I recognize that the relationship with my mentor continues after my formal training period, and I will commit to being a supportive colleague throughout my professional life.**

**I will seek regular feedback on my performance and ask for a formal evaluation at least annually (mandatory at TAMU).** I understand that I can create an Individual Development Plan as a tool for designing my career advancement which is separate from my institutional annual evaluation.

## Responsibilities of Faculty Mentors

**I acknowledge that the postdoctoral period is a time of advanced training intended to develop the skills needed to promote the career of the Postdoctoral Scholar.** I will respect the postdoctoral scholar individual career goals.

**I will ensure that a mutually agreed upon set of expectations and goals are outlined and agreed upon at the start of the postdoctoral training period (see *Expectations agreement*), and I will work with the Postdoctoral Scholar to create a development plan.**

**I will ensure that the Postdoctoral Scholar has sufficient opportunities to acquire the skills necessary to become an expert in an agreed upon area of research.**

**I will strive to maintain a relationship with the Postdoctoral Scholar that is based on trust and mutual respect.** I acknowledge that open communication and periodic formal performance reviews, conducted at least annually, will help ensure that the expectations of both parties are met. I will also be accessible to provide advice and feedback as needed.

**I will promote all ethical standards for conducting research including compliance with all institutional and federal regulations as they relate to responsible conduct in research or possible conflict of interest, e.g., authorship, data ownership and peer-review guidelines; laboratory safety; animal care and use; privacy and human subjects research.** I will clearly define expectations for the responsible conduct of research in my lab and make myself available to discuss ethical, safety, and any related concerns as they arise.

**I will provide the postdoctoral scholar with guidance and mentoring, and will seek the assistance of other faculty and/or departmental/ institutional resources when necessary.** I recognize that I must also educate the Postdoctoral Scholar by example and by providing access to formal opportunities/programs in complementary areas necessary for a successful career.

**I will provide an appropriate training environment to facilitate the Postdoctoral Scholar's personal and professional growth.** I will encourage a progressive increase in the level of responsibility and independence to facilitate the transition to an independent career. I will encourage the Postdoctoral Scholar's attendance at professional meetings to network and present research findings. I will foster the postdoctoral scholar's professional confidence and encourage critical thinking and creativity.

**I will ensure that the research performed by a Postdoctoral Scholar is submitted for publication in a timely manner and that appropriate credit is given for the work performed.** I will acknowledge the postdoctoral scholar's development of any intellectual property and will clearly define future access to tangible research materials according to institutional policy.

**I recognize that there are multiple career options available for postdoctoral scholars and that not all postdoctoral scholars will become academic faculty.** To prepare a Postdoctoral Scholar for other career paths, I will direct her/him to the resources that explore various career paths.

**I will commit to being a supportive colleague to postdoctoral scholars as they transition to the next stage of their careers and, to the extent possible, throughout their professional lives.** I recognize that the role of a mentor continues after the formal training period.

Adapted from AAMC - Compact Between Postdoctoral Appointees and Their Mentors (2017)  
Texas Tech University - MenteeMentorCompactExpectations\_WashUStL.pdf

