

This document contains answers to questions and comments related to the review of the School of Medicine's Policy on matters related to Postdoctoral Fellows.

Q: (paraphrased, multiple emails received on this topic) *There is a section in the policy that defines leave but there is no explicit mention, explanation or assurances related to parental leave. Why is this important topic not being addressed?*

A: I was pleased to see so many of you express strong feelings that this needed to be better defined. Those working on this policy had been doing so for so long that what seemed to be clearly explained from their vantage point was not.

In the previously circulated policy document we thought we covered this by explaining access to family and medical leave (FMLA) which includes parental leave. *Clearly we should have stated more.*

Here is an excerpt from the updated policy (this text can be found on page 5 of the policy document):

Scholar Fellows compensated via payroll may be eligible for **Family and Medical Leave, including Parental Leave**, if they meet the eligibility requirements under the eligible employees section of the UMB Family and Medical Leave Policy <http://cf.umaryland.edu/umpolicies/usmpolicyInfo.cfm?polid=273§ion=all>

- Eligible Scholar Fellows are required to use available paid leave prior to leave without pay.
- This paid leave will reduce the 12 weeks unpaid family and medical leave allowance by the amount of paid leave used.
- The costs of regular premiums for health insurance will continue to be paid during the approved unpaid Family and Medical leave, including Parental Leave, allowance period.
- The School of Medicine *strongly recommends* that mentors provide trainees at least 8 weeks of paid parental leave as recommended by the NIH.

Scholar Fellows compensated via Accounts Payable who have been granted approval for a leave of absence for **Family and Medical Reasons, including Parental Leave...**

Q: Why are we not mandating that our postdoctoral scholar be compensated at level of pay associated with postdoctoral experience defined by the NIH stipend scale?

A: This topic was the catalyst of a number of very passionate discussions over the course of this policy's development and review. Perhaps the best way that I can sum-up the outcome of this section of our policy is in one word: compromise. Everyone involved worked diligently to develop a policy that improved the training environment of our postdoctoral scholars while being mindful of the current challenges being faced by every research institution across our country including the SOM. Establishing a floor for postdoctoral compensation at the NIH's 0-year experience level provides a guarantee and protection where none previously existed. This policy also provides our faculty mentors with the flexibility necessary to effectively navigate these challenging times. (See pages 3 & 4 of the policy document for Pay/ Stipend Guidelines)

Q: Is it the responsibility of the department to send out annual renewal letters to each postdoc?

A: This question refers to the portion of the policy dealing with selection, appointment and duration of appointment (See page 2 of the policy document). Yes, the department in which the postdoctoral fellow is appointment in provided the annual appointment renewal letters.

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Q: Is there a template for the professional development/career development plan for postdocs? Should this follow the PDP cycle?

A: We are reviewing and modifying PDP template which once finalized will be available on the Office of Postdoctoral Scholars' website <http://postdoc.umaryland.edu>. Additionally we are working to fill the position of Director of Pre & Postdoctoral Trainee Career Development. Once this position is filled this individual will provide training on the proper use of the professional development plan for our trainees.

Q: The current document seems to start to address issues that differ for fellows paid through accounts payable (e.g.: scholars on training grants or individual NRSA's) in regards to leave, however there are a few issues that don't seem to be addressed: the different scope and quality of benefits (health, etc.) available to postdocs compensated via payroll vs. those compensated at trainees via accounts payable. Where are we with addressing this? I fear that some of these issues dis-incentivize postdoctoral fellows from applying for independent funding.

A: These are the very issues that have hindered a set of policies related to our postdoctoral fellows from being implemented in years past. After a great deal of energy expended by everyone involved we decided to drop the resolution of these issues from this policy, for the time being, so that we were able to put a policy in place that helped to address other issues that would improve and standardize the postdoctoral experience at the SOM.

The issue of whether postdoctoral trainees funded by NIH sponsored, individual training grants should be compensated via payroll or accounts payable and the various inequalities that stem from having trainees compensated in two different manners is an issue that needs to be addressed at a University level as opposed to a School level. I would not hazard to predict the time frame in which these issue will be resolved but I can assure you that both University and SOM leadership continue to be engaged on this topic.

If you should have any additional questions or comments after reviewing this Q & A document and the recently approved SOM postdoctoral policy please don't hesitate to contact Dudley Strickland, Ph.D., Assistant Dean for Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies dstrickland@som.umaryland.edu or Tom McHugh, Director and Academic Programs Administrator, Graduate Program in Life Sciences and Office of Postdoctoral Scholars tmchugh@som.umaryland.edu .