



Postdoctoral Research Fellowships

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GUIDELINES FOR SETTING UP CONDITIONS OF AWARD AND FOR ADVERTISING POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS IN THE MEDIA

Postdoctoral Researcher Fellows (PDRFs) are highly productive and valuable members of the university's academic community. Such individuals are hosted by a Principal Investigator and the Head of an academic department and will usually join an established research group. PDRFs are not employees of the university and cannot be managed as such. This document provides information and instruction on the administration and management required in terms of the South African Revenue Service (SARS), and the University of Cape Town.

All Postdoctoral Research Fellows who are granted fellowships to conduct research at UCT are required to comply with the university's official and approved **Definition**, as follows:

*Postdoctoral Research Fellowships are normally awarded to individuals within five (5) 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 be considered for up to a maximum of five years. A sixth year of enrolment can only be considered under exceptional circumstances. 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.*

SARS Ruling. All postdoctoral fellowships administered by universities in South Africa must be compliant with the **SARS BINDING CLASS RULING: Universities South Africa (USAf, former HESA), issued in 2020 and in accordance with Section 78(2) of the Tax Administration Act, No. 28 of 2011 (TA Act)**. The Ruling and the Policy Document appended thereto reflect the terms under which PDRFs are taken on by the University of Cape Town and how the sector is managed whilst registered at the university. The terms surrounding the admission of all PDRFs at UCT must be reflected in formal Conditions of Award that must be signed and approved by the DVC responsible for research.

The following **Guidelines for setting up Conditions of Award** and for advertising for postdoctoral researchers have been established to assist you to compile your conditions/advertisement documents to be clear and compliant with the SARS and university's rules. The University as a matter of policy will ensure that all Postdoctoral Fellowships are governed by signed and approved Conditions of Award and that all opportunities for fellowships are advertised internally and externally, so that free and fair competition is ensured.

- The approved Conditions of Award, as well as the advertisements calling for applications for fellowships are subject to scrutiny by the SARS. The Conditions must be compliant with the university's policies and rules, as well as with the SARS Binding Class Ruling, to be exempt from taxation.
- The SARS also require that the call for applications for Fellowships be placed in at least one public forum (such as a journal, or via SARIMA, or social media i.e., LinkedIn, Twitter etc.) in addition to being placed on the university's website.
- The Postgraduate Centre & Funding Office will not be permitted to enrol any PDRF unless Conditions of Award have been established, signed, and approved, and unless the PDRF incumbent fits the university's formal *Definition* of a PDRF. Conditions of Award may be set out in the form of a call for application or advertisement.

Contracts. If funds to support the PDRF are sourced via a contract, it must be made clear in that contract that provision has been made for a postdoctoral fellowship. Fellowships may not be awarded as payment in return for any service(s) provided.

Postdoctoral Research Fellows' status at UCT. PDRFs are *neither employees nor students but fall into their own category*. When they are selected by the University to enrol as a PDRF and to conduct research, they are awarded Fellowships, rather than being paid salaries. It is important that this distinction is made when setting Conditions of Award and when advertising fellowships for postdoctoral research. It is therefore necessary that the University is clear in differentiating the selection processes and conditions under which postdoctoral researchers are taken on, from those of staff members. Accordingly, advertisements for staff (Research Assistants who will be paid a salary, for example) or postgraduate students must be separate from those pertaining to Postdoctoral Research Fellows. Specifically, language is important – for example, the fellowship value may not be referred to as a 'salary'.

Part-time employment. PDRFs are permitted to undertake 12 hours per week of remunerated employment. Such employment cannot be undertaken as part of the research project, but rather as the individual's own professional development. Remuneration is taxable and must be processed via UCT'S Human Resources.

All Conditions of Award and/or advertisements must follow the same structure and contain the following:

1. Purpose: The Purpose must describe the source of the fellowship funds and the objective of the postdoctoral research, e.g., The XXX Unit has embarked on a 3-year project sponsored by the XXX for research in the XXX [area of research].

2. Call for application the call for application should:

- invite suitably qualified candidates to apply.
- include a statement with whom (an academic unit, for example) the successful incumbent(s) will conduct research, and
- describe the research activities that will be required.

3. Conditions of Award (General): The general conditions of award must include elements of the SARS rules, as well as the university's official Definition, specifically that:

- postdoctoral research fellowships are only available to individuals who have achieved the doctoral degree within the past 5 years.
- applicants may not previously have held full-time permanent professional or comprehensive academic posts.
- no benefits or allowances are included in the value of the fellowship (if a travel allowance is available, it must be mentioned separately under **Value and Tenure** and the value declared).
- no statement(s) can be included in the call for application/conditions of award that may be misleading, specifically any statement that may imply an expectation that the incumbent is required to provide a service or services in return for the fellowship; and that
- the successful incumbent will be required to comply with the University's approved policies, procedures, and practises for the postdoctoral sector.

*If applicable, a statement can be made indicating that the successful candidate(s) may, as part of their professional development, be requested to participate in departmental activities such as **limited** teaching and co-supervision and duties incidental thereto. If these activities are going to be remunerated, it must be borne in mind that PDRFs are permitted to undertake part-time employment for no more than 12 hours per week.*

4. Value and tenure and an important note on anticipated increase in value and/or 'top-ups':

- The monetary part of the fellowship must be called the 'value of the fellowship' and not referred to as a salary.
- The full value of the Fellowship must be declared.
- Reference to a range (e.g., between R280 000 and R350 000 per annum) is permitted. However, if a range is used, the criteria for the lower and the higher value of the fellowship must be stated separately.
- If it is anticipated that the value of the fellowship will increase in the second year and subsequent years, this should be stated.
- Any allowance and its value (e.g., relocation or conference travel) should be stated.
- A statement that the fellowship is compliant with the SARS policies/rules and is therefore exempt from taxation, can be included.
- The tenure of the fellowship must be stated. (Note: The maximum tenure is three years, thereafter a 2-year extension can be applied for)

5. Academic Criteria: It is advisable to state, (once again) that the fellowship is only available to individuals who have achieved the doctoral degree within the past 5 years. In addition to this, a description of the actual academic requirements can be included here, e.g., Applicants should have graduated with the PhD degree in the following areas XXXX; applicants must be actively involved in research in XXXXX and have experience and/or interest in XXXXX, etc. The successful applicant must be available to commence with the Fellowship on XX [date].

6. Application requirements: All applications should include:

- a letter of application (it is advisable to request that the applicant state her/his areas of expertise, research interests, experience, etc. in the letter of application);
- a CV including a list of publications/scholarly output;
- copies (or certified copies) of academic transcripts;
- either names (and contact details) OR letters of reference from at least two academics who have taught, supervised, or worked alongside the applicant.

6.1 The name of the person, address and email address to which enquiries and the application packages should be sent should be stated here.

6.2 The closing date for submission of applications should be stated here.

7. Selection Process: Selection and recruitment of applicants can be done at Department, Faculty or URC level, (by committees authorised to select such candidates). In all cases, such selection must take account of the University's approved policies and procedures. The selection process and composition of the selection committee must be stated, e.g., *Eligible and complete applications will be considered by the Faculty Research Board (or the Director of the Unit and a sub-committee).*

8. All advertisements/conditions must contain the following indemnities:

The University of Cape Town reserves the right to:

- **disqualify ineligible, incomplete and/or inappropriate applications,**
- **change the conditions of award or to make no awards at all.**