

**Commission on Research**

**RESOLUTION TO CLARIFY ELIGIBILITY FOR POSTDOCTORAL ASSOCIATE STATUS**

**COR 2024-25A**

Draft Notice Sent to University Council Cabinet

February 13, 2025

First Reading by Commission on Research

March 6, 2025

Approval by Commission on Research

First Reading by Faculty Senate

Approval by Faculty Senate

Staff Senate Comment

Administrative and Professional Faculty Senate Comment

Graduate and Professional Student Senate Comment

Undergraduate Student Senate Comment

First Reading, University Council

Approved, University Council

Approved, President

Effective Date

**WHEREAS**, the Faculty Handbook describes the position titles and duties of all faculty; and

**WHEREAS**, postdoctoral associate, a subcategory of research faculty, is an individual holding a doctoral degree who is engaged in a temporary period of mentored research and/or scholarly training for the purpose of acquiring the professional skills needed to pursue a career path of his or her choosing; and

**WHEREAS**, national bodies including the National Postdoctoral Association and the National Institutes of Health Advisory Committee to the Director Working Group on Re-envisioning NIH-Supported Postdoctoral Training recommend limiting the duration of a postdoctoral traineeship to five years total, even at multiple institutions; and

**WHEREAS**, consistent measurement of the duration of a postdoctoral trainee period supports implementation of these recommendations and clarity with university stakeholders; and

**WHEREAS**, occasional and well-defined exceptions to consistent measurement are justified when in the best interest of the postdoctoral associate;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the faculty handbook, section 6.1.2, be revised as shown below with changes noted in **red**.

### 6.1.2 Postdoctoral Associate

The Office of Research and Innovation administers and supports the [university's postdoctoral associate](#) positions. Appointment to this faculty rank is ~~usually reserved~~ for persons ~~with a terminal degree~~ who ~~have been awarded a doctoral degree no more than four years prior to the effective date of the appointment with a minimum of one year of eligibility remaining and~~ are engaged in research for a restricted period under the direction of a faculty mentor. The position of postdoctoral associate is intended to be a limited-term traineeship ~~lasting two to four years (not to exceed five years)~~, during which the individual works under the supervision of one or more senior faculty mentors in preparation for a career in academe or research. Funding is usually from a grant, contract, or a postdoctoral fellowship. Postdoctoral associates are considered temporary or short-term appointments by definition and ~~are always on restricted not appropriate for regular~~ appointments. See section 2.6.2 for more information about restricted appointments.

Individuals are eligible to be postdoctoral associates for a ~~The~~ maximum ~~cumulative allowable duration of employment for a postdoctoral associate held by a single individual, even at multiple institutions,~~ five years, including prior experience in a postdoc position at another institution. Generally, eligibility is calculated from the date of conferral of a terminal degree. Appointment to this faculty rank is usually for persons who have been awarded a doctoral degree no more than four years prior to the effective date of the appointment with a minimum of one year of eligibility remaining. ~~The maximum allowable time an individual may be employed in the rank of postdoctoral associate at Virginia Tech is five years.~~ Continued appointment beyond five years ~~would~~ requires a promotion in rank. ~~Exceptions for extenuating circumstances may be made by the Office of Research and Innovation.~~

Typically, postdoctoral associates have very limited responsibility for project management, supervision of personnel, or design of the research project on which they are funded. Rather, the position enables the individual to continue studies in a specialty area while gaining practical experience in the field. The postdoctoral traineeship may include opportunities to write and submit grant proposals. With the approval of the department head, chair, or school director, the postdoctoral associate may serve as co-principal investigator. In certain cases (such as young career award proposals), a postdoctoral associate is permitted to submit a grant as a principal investigator. Requests for principal investigator status may be submitted to the Office of Research and Innovation.

Searches are not required to fill a postdoctoral associate position.