

# Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. How much leave am I eligible for if I have a new child, or a family or medical emergency?<sup>1</sup>

A Postdoctoral Scholar is eligible for six weeks of paid parental leave to care for a new biological or adopted child. The expectation is that the Postdoctoral Scholar will exhaust all available vacation and sick leave (approx. 4 ½ weeks per year). The PI will then grant a minimum additional 1½ weeks of paid leave. This paid parental leave must be taken within one year of the birth or placement of the child.

- Scholars may be eligible for Family and Medical Leave if they meet the eligibility requirements under the exceptions section of the eligible employees section of the Family and Medical Leave Policy: [http://hr.unc.edu/policies-procedures-guidelines/epa-non-faculty-policies/epa-nf-leave/CCM1\\_017375](http://hr.unc.edu/policies-procedures-guidelines/epa-non-faculty-policies/epa-nf-leave/CCM1_017375).

## 2. Can I take courses at UNC? How do I enroll? What is the cost?

There are two options available for postdocs who would like to take courses here at UNC-Chapel Hill. Both options listed below are on a space available basis. Postdocs are not eligible for the permanent employee tuition waiver, so the cost associated will be an out of pocket expense.

**Part-time Studies (courses for credit):** All postdocs are eligible to take courses through the William and Ida Friday Center for Continuing Education as well as register for courses in the classroom or on-line as a Part-Time students. The full range of graduate and undergraduate courses are open during the day on a space-available basis, and core curriculum of undergraduate courses are offered at night. Admission to UNC-Chapel Hill is required for enrollment into the classroom courses. For graduate-level courses, you will need permission from the professor teaching the course to register for the class. More information on Part-time Classroom Studies can be found on the William and Ida Friday Center for Continuing Education Website (<http://www.fridaycenter.unc.edu/cp/cs/index.htm>). How to Apply for Admission To Part-time Classroom Studies: (<http://www.fridaycenter.unc.edu/cp/cs/applprc.htm>).

**Auditing Courses:** Another option for postdoctoral scholars, for non-credit, is auditing a class. Postdocs can pay a \$20 fee per class to the University Cashier's Office with permission from the instructor and completion of a drop/add registration form to the Office of the University Registrar. More information can be found on the Office of the University Registrar's website: (<http://registrar.unc.edu/registration/registration-policies/auditing-a-course/>)

## 3. Does UNC provide any retirement plans to postdocs?

Yes. The UNC System Voluntary 403(b) Retirement Program is a supplemental retirement plan that allows employees to set aside payroll-deducted contributions on a tax-deferred or Roth after-tax basis. Postdocs can set up a 403(b) supplemental retirement plan by contacting Ashley Nicklis of the benefits office at 919-962-6255. For more information visit: [http://hr.unc.edu/benefits/benefit-plans/retirement-programs/CCM1\\_017396](http://hr.unc.edu/benefits/benefit-plans/retirement-programs/CCM1_017396).

## 4. What is the Childcare Subsidy Lottery?

UNC-Chapel Hill Child Care Financial Assistance Program can provide limited funds to assist eligible postdocs with the costs of state-regulated child care. Since funds are limited, eligibility cannot guarantee assistance. For more information, call 962-6008 or visit the employee services website: [http://hr.unc.edu/benefits/work-life-and-wellness/child-care-programs/CCM1\\_018382](http://hr.unc.edu/benefits/work-life-and-wellness/child-care-programs/CCM1_018382).

## 5. Can I defer or reduce my student loan payments? What are my loan deferment or forbearance options?

Postdoctoral scholars may be eligible for deferment of Stafford, Perkins, and similar student loans because they are engaged in a full-time fellowship program at an institution of higher learning. As a postdoc, you may qualify under the condition of continuing your professional training at this institution. Education-related deferment forms may be obtained at the National Student Loan Program site:

<http://www.nslp.org/borrowers/>.

Lending agencies differ in their deferral requirements—your individual agency will make the final determination of eligibility. Regardless of deferment decisions, you are ultimately responsible for timely payment of any unsubsidized loans. Follow the guidelines on the website for [Deferment](#).

<http://www.nslp.org/borrowers/resources/managing-student-loans/>

Forbearance may also be an option if you are having difficulty making your federal student loan payment and don't qualify for a deferment, contact your loan holder about a forbearance to delay or lower your monthly payment.

## 6. How will I be evaluated? How can I prepare for my Annual Performance Evaluation?

A mentor of a Postdoctoral Scholar must complete an annual written evaluation of the Scholar's performance. The evaluation process should be simple and must include the opportunity for the Scholar to respond in writing to the evaluation. For guidelines, visit the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs Faculty Resources webpage: <http://postdocs.unc.edu/?q=node/32>. OPA suggests taking initiative by preparing for your PI evaluation using the self-assessment tool, which can be found at the following link:

<http://postdocs.unc.edu/files/postdoc%20self%20assessment%20form.doc>.

## 7. Can I attend sporting events at UNC?

Before planning to attend sporting events at UNC, become familiar with UNC Faculty and Staff Athletic Ticket Policies: <http://tarheelblue.cstv.com/genrel/030608aaq.html>.

UNC employees and postdocs can gain free access for themselves and their immediate families to regular season home games for Men's Soccer, Women's Soccer, and Men's Lacrosse by displaying their UNC One Card or UNC Hospital ID at the gate of the sporting facility, based on availability.

Based on availability, tickets in reserved seating are free for Baseball and Women's Basketball. For Baseball, beginning one and a half hours prior to the start of the game, postdocs can go to the Boshamer Stadium ticket office to pick up a reserved ticket for themselves and their immediate family (limit 4). For Women's Basketball, beginning one hour prior to the start of the game, postdocs can go to the Carmichael ticket office to pick up a reserved ticket for themselves and their immediate family. Please be sure to display your UNC One Card or UNC Hospitals ID when picking up your ticket(s).

**NOTE:** UNC One Cards, UNC Hospital IDs and complimentary passes are not valid for post-season ACC and NCAA Championship events. **Postdoc Scholars are not eligible to participate in the student lottery.**

## 8. Can my appointment be discontinued? What are my rights?<sup>1</sup>

A Postdoctoral Scholar may have his/her appointment ended at any time during the appointment if the funding supporting his/her appointment ends, or if he/she is found by his/her mentor to have violated the expectations set forth in the handbook (see Section III in the UNC Postdoctoral Scholar Policies). Discontinuation of appointment for cause is to be preceded by written notice of intent to discontinue, and is subject to invocation by the affected Scholar of the grievance procedure provided by these Policies (see Section VIII). Therefore, the mentor should document problems or concerns with postdoctoral scholar or discuss discontinuation for cause in advance with the Chair or Dean.

If the Postdoctoral Scholar is on a Visa, discontinuation should be coordinated with the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and the Office for International Students and Scholars prior to giving written notice.

When a Scholar has been notified of the intention to discontinue his/her appointment for cause, the Vice Chancellor for Research may suspend the Scholar at any time and continue the suspension until a final decision concerning discontinuation is rendered; the power to suspend shall be invoked only in exceptional circumstances, and when it is determined to be in the best interests of the University. During the period of suspension, the Scholar shall receive full pay.

If a Scholar does not initiate a grievance within 14 calendar days (as provided in Section VIII.b.), then the appointment shall be discontinued immediately without further recourse. If a Scholar initiates a grievance and the final outcome of the grievance procedure is to uphold the discontinuation of appointment for cause, then the Scholar's discontinuation is effective as of the date of the final decision in the grievance procedure. If a Scholar initiates a grievance and the final outcome of the grievance procedure is not to uphold the discontinuation of appointment for cause, then the Scholar's discontinuation is effective ninety calendar days following the date of the final decision in the grievance procedure.

### 9. What is the maximum term of appointment for postdocs?<sup>1</sup>

The maximum term of appointment for a Postdoctoral Scholar is **five years**. Following this five-year training period, a Postdoctoral Scholar must either be moved into an established employee position or separated with a minimum ninety calendar days notice in advance of the five-year maximum.

Options for promotion for Postdoctoral Scholars are listed on the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs website <http://postdocs.unc.edu/?q=node/32>.

- This term of appointment refers to **total** time spent at UNC-Chapel Hill under rank code 27 or 28, and does not include time spent at other institutions.
- To request an extension of appointment, postdoc mentors/advisors may submit a Request for Extension of Appointment form, indicating exceptional circumstances that require an extended appointment. This form must be cosigned by the Postdoctoral Scholar, as well as the department chair (or dean when appropriate), and submitted to the Vice Chancellor for Research. Requests for extensions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The form and instructions for requesting extensions are available on the OPA's website: <http://postdocs.unc.edu/?q=node/32>.

### 10. What do the different rank codes mean, and how do they affect my taxes?

**Code 27: Postdoctoral Fellow/Trainee**—An individual with an earned doctorate, who holds a *sponsored postdoctoral fellowship or traineeship*, who is engaged in postdoctoral training through research for a fixed period of time, but no more than five years, and *receives a stipend or training allowance*.

**Code 28: Postdoctoral Research Associate**—An individual with an earned doctorate, who is engaged in postdoctoral training through research for a fixed period of time, but no more than five years, and *receives compensation for services performed*.

Code 27 is exempt from the Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA); code 28 is not. For postdocs categorized as code 27, completion of the "Certification of Non-Service Requirements of Scholarship/ Fellowship for Social Security Withholding Purposes" form certifies that the postdoctoral fellow/trainee meets the criteria for FICA tax exemption. The form can be accessed at [http://hr.unc.edu/n/CCM3\\_015482](http://hr.unc.edu/n/CCM3_015482).

The FICA tax exemption pertains to stipends and training allowances associated with fellowships, traineeships, or services as an independent contractor that are carried out at UNC-Chapel Hill. These stipends and training allowances are **not** subject to the FICA tax because the payments are not compensation for services as an employee.<sup>2</sup>

For more information on this policy, see [http://financepolicy.unc.edu/1111\\_1rd](http://financepolicy.unc.edu/1111_1rd).

<sup>1</sup> For our most current policies, check our Postdoc Resources webpage <http://postdocs.unc.edu/?q=node/50>.

<sup>2</sup> Condensed from [http://hr.unc.edu/policies-procedures-guidelines/epa-non-faculty-policies/student-policies-guidelines/CCM3\\_015477](http://hr.unc.edu/policies-procedures-guidelines/epa-non-faculty-policies/student-policies-guidelines/CCM3_015477)

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