

Frequently Asked Questions

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

A Postdoctoral Scholar is eligible for six weeks of paid parental leave to care for a new biological or adopted child, which includes exhausting all available vacation and sick leave. This paid parental leave must be taken within one year of the birth or placement of the child.

- Scholars are eligible to use up to **six weeks of paid parental leave** though they only earn 22 days vacation and sick leave (approx. 4 ½ weeks) per year.
- 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.

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

All postdocs are eligible to take non-credit 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 student. The full range of graduate and undergraduate courses is available. 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. Applications for Part-time Classroom Studies can be found on the William and Ida Friday Center for Continuing Education Website (<http://www.fridaycenter.unc.edu/cp/index.htm>) and on the How to Apply page (<http://www.fridaycenter.unc.edu/cp/cs/applprc.htm>). Postdocs are not eligible for the permanent employee tuition waiver, so the cost will be out of pocket for all courses at the university. Please note that Part-time Classroom Studies does not grant degrees.

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.

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 962-1483 or visit the employee services website: http://hr.unc.edu/benefits/work-life-and-wellness/child-care-programs/CCM1_018382.

5. Can I defer my student loans? What are my loan deferment 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 (*continued on p. 2*)

professional training at this institution. Education-related deferment forms may be obtained at the National Student Loan Program (NSLP) site:

<http://www.nslp.org/vnews/display.v/ART/424f47689ab8f>.

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 Web site and refer to the [Deferment Form Guide](#) to view a list of available deferments and links to other forms:

<http://www.nslp.org/vnews/display.v/ART/424f47689ab8f#deferment%20form%20guide>

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 you can find at: <http://postdocs.unc.edu/files/form%20for%20Appointee%20Evaluation.pdf>.

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 Olympic Sport events (Men's and Women's Soccer, Women's Basketball, Men's Lacrosse and Baseball) by displaying either their complimentary pass, UNC One Card or UNC Hospitals ID at the gate of the sporting facility, based on availability in all instances. **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.**

The UNC Athletic Ticket Office is located in the Williamson Athletic Center (two buildings to the left of the Dean E. Smith Center on Skipper Bowles Drive), 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday–Friday.

8. Can my appointment be discontinued? What are my rights?

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. 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 in the handbook). 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 an International, 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 and Economic Development 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. Further, such suspension shall be with full pay. (*continued on p. 3*)

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?

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 and Economic Development. Requests for extensions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The form for requesting extensions is 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.

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.¹

For more information on this policy, see http://financepolicy.unc.edu/1111_1rd.

¹ Condensed from http://hr.unc.edu/policies-procedures-guidelines/epa-non-faculty-policies/student-policies-guidelines/CCM3_015477

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