

POLICY 2500-005

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PREAMBLE

A postdoctoral fellowship is defined as a training period of limited duration during which a person who has recently obtained a doctoral degree carries out an independent research project, under the supervision of a professor specializing in the field of research, within the framework of a training period involving financial support. Carrying out one or more research projects as part of a postdoctoral fellowship constitutes a full-time occupation. Financial support for the postdoctoral fellow (hereinafter referred to as the fellow) may take the form of a bursary (including a scholarship granted to the fellow directly by a funding agency) or a salary, depending on the form of supervision agreed to with the fellow.

It is advisable to establish a policy to facilitate the integration and recognition of postdoctoral fellows within the university community.

In the event of any discrepancies between the English and French versions of this Policy, the French version shall prevail.

1. OBJECTIVES

The University aims to facilitate the integration and recognition of postdoctoral fellows in the university community :

- by defining their status, supervisory relationship, rights and responsibilities;
- by specifying the role and responsibilities of the University, faculties and professors in hosting and supervising postdoctoral fellows;
- by contributing to their training; and,
- by encouraging their participation in university life.

2. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

This policy :

- applies to all persons who have been granted postdoctoral fellow status in accordance with Article 3 of this policy;
- is binding on all members of the university community.

3. POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW STATUS

To obtain postdoctoral fellow status, a person must meet the following conditions :

1. have obtained a PhD, a post-graduate doctorate, or the equivalent, including any professional specialty degree in medicine, less than five (5) years prior to the start date of the postdoctoral fellowship; this eligibility period may be extended to ten (10) years if the person has left the job market and ceased active research due to parental or adoption leave;

2. provide confirmation that a professor at the Université de Sherbrooke is committed to supervising the applicant and is offering a full-time postdoctoral fellowship to enable the applicant to acquire more specialized or complementary research expertise;
3. provide proof, jointly with the professor accepting responsibility for supervision (hereinafter referred to as the supervisor), that sufficient financial resources will be available for the duration of the fellowship, which is presumed to be the case when the conditions of funding and financial support comply with the requirements of Article 7 of this policy.

4. ADMISSION AND REGISTRATION

All fellows must be admitted to and registered to the University. To do so, they must fill out and submit the *Postdoctoral Fellowship Admission and Registration Form* ([Formulaire d'admission et d'inscription - Stage postdoctoral](#)), along with any other documents that may be required under current regulations, to the Faculty administration, who will forward them to the appropriate authorities.

5. DURATION

Ideally, the duration of a postdoctoral fellowship should be two (2) years, renewable for one (1) year after a review, for a maximum of three (3) years. In all cases, the minimum duration of a postdoctoral fellowship may not be less than six (6) months. In the event of a justified leave (illness, maternity, etc.), the fellowship may be extended. In certain cases, a request for an extension not exceeding a total fellowship duration of five (5) years may be addressed directly to the Vice-Dean for Research and Graduate Studies of the Faculty to which the postdoctoral fellow is registered, indicating the reasons for the extension.

6. SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1. Faculty

The Faculty :

- ensures that the fellow meets the qualification criteria described in section 3 of this policy;
- admits fellows in collaboration with the Registrar's Office;
- registers fellows on a semesterly basis, with the exception of the fellow's first registration, which is carried out by the Registrar's Office;
- forwards a copy of the *Postdoctoral Fellowship Admission and Registration Form* ([Formulaire d'admission et d'inscription - Stage postdoctoral](#)) to the Registrar's Office and to the Financial Resources Department;
- informs the Registrar's Office and the Financial Resources Department of the termination of a postdoctoral fellowship as soon as the event occurs;
- maintains an up-to-date list of postdoctoral fellows;

- sends the future fellow the institutional documents required to prepare for their arrival, including :
 - an offer of admission, accompanied by the Postdoctoral Fellowship Admission and Registration Form, specifying the duration and conditions of the postdoctoral fellowship, as stipulated in Article 11.1;
 - a list of policies, regulations and procedures relevant to carrying out a postdoctoral fellowship at the Université de Sherbrooke, including this policy;
 - information on the management of postdoctoral scholarships and the conditions of financial support, if applicable;
 - information on the training available to the future fellow;
 - a form for identifying postdoctoral fellow status based on established criteria to determine the type of supervision and financial support appropriate for a given postdoctoral fellowship.
- assists the international fellow¹ in obtaining the eligibility certificate to qualify for a tax exemption, if they are entitled;
- retains a document signed by the fellow and their supervisor, identifying mutual expectations to ensure the objectives of the fellowship are met. This document may be integrated into the training program offered to the fellow;
- retains a copy of the fellow's assessments which are based on the achievement of the fellow's objectives. These documents may form part of the training activities offered within the training program.

6.2. The professor responsible for supervising a postdoctoral fellowship

The supervisor is responsible for hosting and supervising the fellow and must :

- grant the fellow access to the material resources needed to carry out their research activities, including an adequate workspace and standard office equipment (telephone, photocopier, computer, e-mail, etc.), within the limits of available resources;
- provide international fellows with a letter of invitation for their work permit application;
- see to it that the fellow has the financial resources they need to complete their fellowships in conditions conducive to success;
- ensure that the fellow fills out the Postdoctoral Fellowship Admission and Registration Form no later than upon their arrival to the host lab;
- fill out the form for identifying postdoctoral fellow status, in collaboration with the fellow no later than upon their arrival, to determine the type of supervision and financial support appropriate to the working relationship between the fellow and the supervisor;

¹ A person who is not a Canadian citizen, nor a permanent resident within the meaning of the Act respecting immigration to Canada (S.C. 25-26 El, II, c. 52) and the regulations adopted under its authority, nor an Indian within the meaning of the Indian Act (R.S.C., 1985, chapter I-5), and who is enrolled in a university institution, is considered to have "international" status.

- ensure that the fellow is enrolled in the appropriate academic activities as per the type of supervision provided;
- help the fellow become well-established in their new research environment;
- create opportunities for scientific exchanges with the fellow, enabling them to prepare for a scientific career in research, whether academic or non-academic;
- facilitate the fellow's connections within the university community and help them navigate the social and cultural environment of the region;
- highlight and promote the fellow's work and achievements;
- evaluate, at regular intervals and in accordance with the elements presented in Article 11.4, the fellow's progress and performance in order to ensure that their fellowship experience is a successful one;
- evaluate and approve, where applicable, the forms used to monitor the fellow's progress in their training program.

6.3. The postdoctoral fellow

The postdoctoral fellow commits to :

- conducting their research with respect for their colleagues, the equipment and material resources made available to them, where applicable, and the fellowship environment;
- becoming familiar with, and respect the contents of, the institutional policies, regulations and administrative processes relevant to the completion of their postdoctoral fellowship;
- completing the Admission and Registration Form for a Postdoctoral Fellowship, and submitting it to the Faculty, in accordance with the prescribed procedure;
- filling out the form for identifying postdoctoral fellow status, in collaboration with the supervisor, to determine the type of supervision and financial support appropriate to the working relationship between the fellow and the supervisor, and submitting it to the Faculty, in accordance with the prescribed procedure;
- filling out, where applicable, the training documents related to their development plan;
- registering for the various training activities set out in the development plan, where applicable, in order to maintain their status as a scholarship holder postdoctoral fellow. If the fellow fails to register for a given semester, their status will change from scholarship holder to salaried worker;
- participating in the progress and performance assessments required to maintain their status, within the prescribed deadlines;
- notifying the person supervising the fellowship and the Faculty, in writing, at least two (2) weeks before early termination or interruption of the fellowship.

6.4. Financial Resources Department

The Financial Resources Department commits to :

- documenting the financial agreement established with the fellow and the amount and duration of the scholarship (including scholarships granted directly to the fellow by a granting agency) or of the salary, no later than upon the fellow's registration;
- retaining a copy of the form for identifying postdoctoral fellow status which states the type of supervision and financial support appropriate for each fellow;
- reserving the necessary funds, if applicable, to respect the financial agreement established with the fellow according to the pertinent administrative rules.

7. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

7.1. Financial support

The admission of a postdoctoral fellow to the University must be accompanied by confirmation of the financial support, in the form of a scholarship or salary depending on the type of supervisory relationship agreed upon, which will be offered to the fellow for the full duration of the fellowship. This funding may come, in whole or in part, from :

- an external organization;
- the University;
- grants or research contracts held by one or multiple faculty members;
- other organizations;
- any combination of the above.

The financial support offered to a postdoctoral fellow should be equivalent to that provided by the granting agencies in their field of research. The fellow's supervisor must inform the Financial Resources Department if the offer of admission is to be binding on the University.

The financial support offered to a fellow may take the form of a scholarship (including a scholarship granted directly to a fellow by a granting agency) or a salary, depending on the outcome of the analysis of the type of supervision and financial support, as laid out in the form for identifying postdoctoral fellow status, and must comply with government requirements. If the financial support is in the form of a salary, the Financial Resources Department must refer to the *Directive on postdoctoral fellows receiving financial support in the form of a salary* ([Directive 2600-078](#)).

7.2. Fellowship conditions

Fellows must ensure that their research is conducted responsibly, taking into account material and organizational constraints. Like other graduate students, fellows must become familiar with the habits and customs of the host laboratory or research group.

8. ADDITIONAL SERVICES OFFERED TO POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

Upon registration, postdoctoral fellows must pay all student fees, excluding tuition, on a nine (9)-credit basis, in accordance with Annexes 4, 5 and 6 of the *Règlement des études* ([Règlement 2575-009](#)) of the University.

The Registrar's Office issues a student card to each fellow, which gives them access to the University's libraries and other services, such as the Sports Centre and public transit, on condition that they follow the procedure for activating the card.

The student association representing graduate students is the point of contact for postdoctoral fellows.

9. TRAINING

The University recognizes that many postdoctoral fellows aspire to high-level professional careers in a variety of environments and wishes to facilitate their acquisition of the professional and cross-disciplinary skills needed to launch successful careers as researchers, managers, coordinators and scientists. In recognition of the significant nature of their intellectual contribution to its own research, creation, innovation and training activities, the University encourages fellows to participate in the academic activities offered to the University community by the *Centre Compétences recherche plus* (CR+). In addition, the University requires that fellows supported by scholarships stemming from its professors' research funds participate in its training programs, free of charge.

10. COMPLEMENTARY TRAINING DUTIES

Depending on the needs of the University and the personal training objectives of postdoctoral fellows, the latter may be asked to perform additional training duties, which may include teaching courses at all levels, preparing teaching materials, supervising study projects, participating in the supervision of research projects, or any other type of contribution to the supervision of graduate students.

All complementary duties assigned to a postdoctoral fellow are subject to compliance with the collective agreements and protocols binding the Université de Sherbrooke to its personnel, as well as the requirements of the organizations that fund the postdoctoral fellowship. A postdoctoral fellow may therefore have several statuses.

11. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

11.1. Offer of admission for a postdoctoral fellowship

An offer of admission for a postdoctoral fellowship is sent to the prospective fellow by the Faculty.

11.2. Registration

The fellow fills out the *Postdoctoral Fellowship Admission and Registration Form* ([Formulaire d'admission et d'inscription - Stage postdoctoral](#)), which must be co-signed by the supervisor and the person at the Faculty responsible for postdoctoral fellowships. Each party keeps a copy for its own records. The Faculty sends one copy of the admission form to the Registrar's Office and another to the Financial Resources Department.

Apart from the first registration, which is carried out by the Registrar's Office, the Faculty must register the fellow for each semester during which the fellowship is active. All internal administrative bodies that may be affected by the fellowship conditions are notified of the commitments made to the fellow, no later than at the time of registration.

11.3. Financial support

To determine the appropriate level of financial support, the fellow must, together with their supervisor, complete the form for identifying postdoctoral fellow status to determine the form of supervision agreed upon between them or the source of the financial support, and submit it to the Faculty. The Financial Resources Department is informed, no later than at the time of registration, of the financial commitments made to the fellow, the type of support, the amount and the period covered by the grant or salary. If the fellow and the supervisor need to modify the conditions of supervision initially agreed upon, in particular if the source of the financial support is modified, a new form for identifying postdoctoral fellow status must be filled out and submitted to the Faculty.

11.4. Assessment

If the planned duration of a postdoctoral fellowship exceeds one (1) year, an assessment of the fellowship's progress must be carried out at regular intervals by the fellow's supervisor. This assessment may take place as part of the fellow's training program.

There must be at least one assessment of the fellow's progress and performance per each six (6) month period. Following such an assessment, the supervising professor will send a copy to the fellow and a copy to the Faculty, who will place it in the fellow's file. If a fellow feels that the assessment was inadequate, they may add a letter of explanation to their file.

11.5. Termination or interruption of the postdoctoral fellowship

Interruption of the fellowship, financial support or any other condition stipulated in the fellow's initial agreement, at the request of the supervisor, may only be authorized by the University in cases of absolute necessity. The following situations may justify such a decision:

- immediate and unforeseeable cuts in funding for the research project when this funding comes from an external source;
- the fellow's inability to achieve the objectives set out in the document submitted at the time of initial registration. This inability must be supported by an assessment report of which the fellow has been made aware.

No postdoctoral fellowship creates an employment relationship between the University and the fellow. As a result, fellows are not eligible for employee benefit programs.

Fellows may interrupt their fellowship temporarily for medical reasons or other major events. In such cases, the fellow must notify their supervisor as soon as possible. Unless otherwise agreed upon or required by the regulations of the granting agencies, the supervisor is not obliged to maintain financial support during such interruptions.

Any interruption of the fellowship or any significant changes to the conditions of the fellowship agreed upon at admission must be preceded by a notice provided to the fellow at least twenty (20) business days before the desired date of the interruption or changes to the conditions.

Any notice of interruption of the fellowship must be sent to the fellow by the Faculty, after consultation with the Financial Resources Department, which must be provided with a copy of the notice.

12. ATTESTATION

On recommendation of the Faculty, which has itself received the favorable recommendation of the professor supervising for the fellowship, the University issues an attestation to the fellow who has completed the fellowship. The attestation specifies the nature, location, Department, Faculty and duration of the postdoctoral fellowship, as well as the name of the professor responsible for supervising the fellowship.

13. IN THE EVENT OF A DISPUTE

In the event of a dispute, the University advocates a solution negotiated between the parties in good faith and with professionalism.

In the event of a disagreement concerning the application or interpretation of this policy, the parties are invited to attempt to resolve the dispute informally by submitting their case to their Faculty's Vice-Dean responsible for research. This person monitors the situation and provides a report to the Dean.

If a serious dispute persists, the fellow may lodge a complaint with the University's Vice-Rector responsible for research. The complaint must be made in writing and include the following:

1. a description of the relevant facts;
2. identification of the person or body responsible for the alleged violation of one or more of the rights provided for in the policy;
3. a specification of the relevant provisions of the policy that are invoked in support of the complaint.

Upon receipt of the complaint, the Vice-Rector responsible for research studies the complaint, shares it with the University's Executive Committee and suggests possible solutions. To facilitate resolution of the dispute, the University's Executive Committee may arrange to obtain the assistance or expertise of a qualified institution or person. The solution chosen by the University's Executive Committee is proposed to the parties.

If the parties refuse the solution proposed by the University's Executive Committee, the Vice-Rector responsible for research initiates a mediation process in accordance with the procedure

described in the *Politique sur la protection de la propriété intellectuelle à l'Université de Sherbrooke* ([Politique 2500-049](#)).

14. POLICY DIRECTIVES

The University's Executive Committee establishes, when necessary, any directives arising from this policy.

15. RESPONSIBILITY

The Vice-Rector responsible for research is responsible for the application, dissemination and updating of the *Policy for hosting and supervising postdoctoral fellows* (Policy 2500-005).

16. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy came into effect on September 1st, 2000; the most recent amendments were approved by the University Council on April 3rd, 2024 (CU-2024-04-03-06).