

Postdoctoral Officers Handbook 2023

Columbia University

 COLUMBIA|RESEARCH
Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

PLEASE NOTE THAT ANY INFORMATION IN

THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

BETWEEN COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK
AND INTERNATIONAL UNION, UAW,
AND ITS LOCAL UNION, COLUMBIA POSTDOCTORAL WORKERS-UAW
LOCAL 4100,

DATED JULY 1, 2020 - JUNE 30, 2023,

TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER THE HANDBOOK INFORMATION

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Postdoctoral Appointments

A postdoc 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 their choosing.¹ While rare, some appointments are made to individuals of greater experience who wish to retrain themselves for careers in a new discipline or specialty. Postdocs work under the guidance of a principal investigator who may be a faculty member or an officer of research.

Effective January 1, 2022, schools, departments, centers, and institutes will no longer need to request fourth- and fifth-year extensions from the Provost for Postdoctoral Research Scientists, Postdoctoral Research Scholars, Postdoctoral Research Fellows, or Postdoctoral Clinical Fellows. These postdoctoral researchers can be reappointed for a maximum of five years, including all periods as either a full-time or part-time postdoc at Columbia or other institutions. Postdocs appointed for five years will not be eligible for extensions. Should schools, departments, centers, or institutes want them to continue beyond five years, an appropriate affirmative action search will need to be conducted for an Associate Research Scientist/Scholar position. Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EOAA) will not grant waivers for them to be appointed as Associate Research Scientists/Scholars. It is expected that the postdoc will either leave to take a position outside the University or have their appointment terminated unless they are selected for an Associate Research Scientist/Scholar position upon the completion of an open affirmative action search.

Postdoctoral Appointments

There are four grades of postdoctoral appointment at Columbia University. Please note that OPA does not support Postdoctoral Resident Fellows or ACGME Postdoctoral Clinical Fellows.

Postdoctoral Research Scientists/Scholars (PDRS) are recent recipients of the doctorate, or its professional equivalent, who come to the University to continue their training, or individuals of greater experience who wish to retrain themselves in a new discipline or specialty. PDRSs may be appointed for full- or part-time service for a term of up to twelve months at a time. PDRSs are paid a salary through the Office of the Controller or by an affiliated hospital or institute.

Postdoctoral Research Fellows (PDF) are recent recipients of the doctorate, or its professional equivalent, who have won fellowships, grants, or awards, usually from external agencies, to continue their training at the University, or individuals of greater experience who have won fellowships, grants, or awards permitting them to retrain themselves in a new discipline or specialty. PDFs may be appointed for full- or part-time service for a term of up to twelve months at a time. PDFs are generally not paid a salary; instead, they usually receive fellowship stipends, either through the University or directly from an external funding agency.

Postdoctoral Clinical Fellows (PCF) are recent recipients of the doctorate, who come to the University to gain additional clinical training after completing their residency, or individuals of greater experience who wish to change clinical specialties. PCFs may be appointed for full- or part-time service for a term of up to

¹ Definition of postdoc created by the [National Postdoctoral Association](#) with acceptance of definition from both the NIH and NSF.

twelve months at a time. PCFs may simultaneously hold appointments as officers of instruction of the rank of “Assistant in Clinical (Department)”. Depending upon the source of funding, one of these appointments will be full-time and the other, part-time. When a PCF receives a stipend, the appointment as a postdoctoral clinical fellow is full-time and the Assistant in Clinical (Department) is part-time. The reverse is true when the individual is paid a salary.

Postdoctoral Residency Fellows (PRF) hold the doctorate of Medicine, Dental Medicine or Dental Surgery and are enrolled in programs at affiliated hospitals and institutes for the purpose of obtaining additional clinical training before embarking on independent careers as physicians and dentists. They may be appointed for part-time service for a term of up to twelve months. The appointment is renewable annually so long as the PRF continues in a training program.

Initial Appointment Letters

The University will provide selected postdoc candidates with a letter of appointment. All postdoc candidates should review their offer letter from their mentor prior to their arrival on campus. The letter must clearly state the terms of the proposed future working relationship. Please be sure it includes the following information:

- Exact title of position offered and an indication of whether the appointment is full-time or part-time;
- Effective dates of appointment. If the appointment is anticipated last for more than one year, the letter should indicate the number of years for which it can be renewed. It should also state that the end date of the appointment may be affected by the individual’s visa expiration date (if any) and/or terms of a sponsored project;
- Exact amount of stipend or salary. If compensation is through a stipend, the letter must also indicate the source of funds, such as a notice of award;
- Name of the anticipated advisor;
- Department or academic/research unit;
- Contact information for the department administrator;
- Anticipated work location
- Specific role in the anticipated research project;
- Teaching responsibilities, if any;
- Notice that the appointment is covered by the [Union Contract](#), with a URL for the agreement;
- URL for benefit information;
- Any additional information pertinent to the appointment.

The letter should be signed by the postdoc’s mentor, the appropriate chair of the department or director of an institute/center and proper dean or vice president, as required.

Authorization for Employment

A postdoctoral research scientist/scholar is required to produce documentation that he/she is either a US citizen or authorized to be employed in the United States; this requirement is satisfied by completion of the government-issued Employment Eligibility Verification Form (I-9 Form) no later than the first day of work. This form is available from your department administrator or [online](#) and must be returned to

him/her on or prior to your first day of work.

Postdoctoral research fellows, clinical fellows, and residency fellows are not required to sign an I-9 form.

Social Security Numbers

A social security number (SSN) is required in order to lawfully work in the United States and receive a salary. To get a SSN or a replacement card, you must prove your U.S. citizenship or immigration status, age, identity, and employment eligibility. Only certain documents are accepted as proof of U.S. citizenship. These include:

- U.S. birth certificate
- U.S. passport
- Certificate of Naturalization
- Certificate of Citizenship

If you are not a U.S. citizen, different rules apply for proving your immigration status. Under the current law, only certain documents can be accepted as proof of identity. If you do not have a SSN, the [Social Security Administration's website](#) provides detailed information about the application process and acceptable proofs of identity.

Once you have applied for a SSN you will be given a receipt. Bring this receipt to your departmental administrator for their use in preparing the paperwork for your appointment. Once you receive your official card from Social Security Administration, give your department administrator a copy so that your records can be updated properly and the appropriate paperwork filed.

Social Security offices are located throughout the City and are typically open from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday except on legal holidays. Apply at the office in the area where you live.

Manhattan residents must apply at:

123 William Street, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10038
1-800-772-1213

Brooklyn residents must apply at:

Brooklyn Social Security Card Center
154 Pierrepont Street, 6th Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Queens residents must apply at:

Queens Social Security Card Center
155-10 Jamaica Avenue, 2nd Floor
Jamaica, NY 11432

Bronx residents must apply at:

820 Concourse Village West, 2nd Floor
Bronx, NY 10451

Northern NJ residents must apply at:

Continental Plz, 2nd floor
401 Hackensack Ave
Hackensack, NJ 07601
1-866-964-4680

The employee should bring their passport, I-94 card, the I-797 Notice of Approval or DS-2019 (for those in J-1 status), and a letter from the hiring department to the Social Security Administration office. It will take approximately three weeks to obtain a Social Security card from Social Security Administration.

Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers

An Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) is a tax processing number issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The IRS issues ITINs to foreign nationals and others who are required to have a US taxpayer identification number for US tax returns and payment responsibilities under the Internal Revenue Code (i.e., those who are to receive stipends only), but who are not eligible for a SSN.

ITINs are for federal tax reporting only and are not intended to serve any other purpose. An ITIN does not authorize you to work in the United States or provide eligibility for Social Security benefits or the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Examples of individuals who need ITINs include:

- Non-resident alien filing a U.S. tax return and not eligible for an SSN;
- U.S. resident alien (based on days present in the United States) filing a U.S. tax return and not eligible for SSN;
- Dependent or spouse of a U.S. citizen/resident alien;
- Dependent or spouse of a non-resident alien visa holder
- Nonresident alien student, professor or researcher filing a U.S. tax return or claiming an exception

Please visit the [IRS website](#) for additional information.

Tasks to Complete Prior to or After Arriving at Columbia

Information for International Scholars

The University has two International Students and Scholars Offices that provide assistance to postdocs coming to Columbia from outside of the United States. Representatives from these offices work with more than 14,000 students and scholars from more than 140 countries and are aware that adjusting to a new

environment is neither easy nor the same for each person. International postdocs should contact the International Students and Scholars Office, which has locations affiliated with all campuses.

The International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) assists the Morningside, CUIMC and Lamont campuses and offers full advisory services every day. In addition to providing immigration support, they also host workshops, programs, and social and cultural events. International students and scholars with questions or requests concerning visas, immigration, travel, employment, and/or other matters related to their stay at Columbia are welcome to walk in to speak to a Program Officer.

International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) Morningside
3280 Broadway, Nash Building, 5th Floor, Room 510 · New York, NY 10027
Website: www.columbia.edu/cu/isso
[Click here for specific advisor contact information](#) to schedule an appointment

International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) CUIMC
Black Building, 650 W 168th Street, 1st Floor, Room 130, New York, NY 10032
Website: www.columbia.edu/cu/isso
Telephone: 212-305-8165
For assistance, please visit the [ISSO CUIMC page](#) and follow the email assistance instructions.

All candidates for postdoctoral appointments who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents must obtain a visa prior to starting their appointment at the University. Therefore, visa issues must be addressed prior to the issuance of a letter of appointment or an offer of an extension of an appointment.

The ISSO assists international students and scholars with, among other things, documentation matters. ISSO's website contains a wealth of information for international postdoctoral applicants. All non-U.S. citizen postdocs should visit its site [here](#) and follow the links under "VISAS and TRAVEL → FOR SCHOLARS (PROFESSORS AND RESEARCHERS)."

Immigration documentation is handled by ISSO. If you are here on a J-1 visa with Columbia sponsorship, the name and address of the appropriate University office is on your Form DS-2019 (issued by the Department of Homeland Security/SEVIS) provided with your visa information.

Although some requests for documentation submitted to ISSO may be filled on the spot, it is prudent to allow at least five business days for processing. Please bring your passport and all relevant immigration documentation (including your Form DS-2019) with you when you go to ISSO for information or document processing.

Each postdoc is responsible for maintaining his or her appropriate status with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and knowing and following pertinent regulations. Postdocs should familiarize themselves with their obligations to DHS by visiting the [DHS website](#). If you hold a J-1 visa, you may also visit the [ISSO website for J-1 Scholars](#). ISSO holds an orientation that is highly encouraged for postdocs on a J-1 visa; contact their office or view their website for upcoming orientation dates. If you are uncertain about your status, check with the ISSO immediately. Also, consult with ISSO before visiting the District Office of the U.S. Immigration Service.

It is very important to become familiar with the following terms, as they are mentioned frequently

throughout an international postdoc's time in the United States.

Visa: A U.S. visa is an entry document. You can apply for an entry visa only at U.S. consulate or embassy outside the United States. It is placed on a page in your passport and certifies that the consular officer has found you eligible to apply for admission at a U.S. port of entry in a particular classification, such as F-1 student, J-1 research scholar, or H-1B assistant professor.

Passport: All postdocs must keep their passports valid at least six months into the future at all times. Extensions can be obtained through the nearest consulate or embassy of your country. The ISSO will provide any appropriate documents that various governments may require.

Entry Visa: The entry visa is a machine-readable stamp in your passport issued by a U.S. consul abroad. It authorizes postdocs to apply for admission into the United States at a port of entry. All international scholars (with the exception of Canadian nationals) are required to have a valid entry visa in their passport at the time of entry into the United States. Your visa specifies the type of immigration status you will hold (H-1, J-1, etc.), the date until which you may enter the United States, and the number of entries you may make before you must apply for a new entry visa. The length of validity of each visa type is determined by an agreement between your home country and the U.S. government and is not necessarily tied to the length of your program of study.

Application for a new entry visa must be made in person at a U.S. consulate outside the United States. The validity period of your entry visa does not determine the length of time you may remain in the United States after you enter. Your length of stay is determined by the completion date on your DS-2019 or your Form I-94 (see below) expiration date, whichever is earlier.

Form I-94 : This is a record of your nonimmigrant status and permission to stay in the United States. The I-94 card is the most important immigration document as it establishes a postdocs' J-1, H-1 or O-1 immigration status. The I-94 card also notes the date and port of arrival in the United States and the expiration date of the visa. The notation "D/S," indicating "Duration of Status," refers to the completion date on the certificate of eligibility (the DS-2019) given to those who wish to enter the United States in J-1 status. Those in H-1 or O status have a specific date by which they must either (1) leave the United States, (2) extend their status, or (3) change to another status. The Form I-94 is also called the Arrival/Departure form because each time you enter the United States you receive a new form, and each time you leave the country you surrender your I-94. Only in the case of short trips of fewer than thirty days to Canada, Mexico, and parts of the Caribbean do you keep this form. *The I-94 is an important form and it is difficult to replace; we recommend that you make a photocopy of both sides of the form to keep separately in case you need to replace it.*

Immigration Status: This status (e.g. H-1, J-1 or O-1) is determined at the time of entry into the United States by an immigration official and is noted on the Form I-94. Unlike your entry visa, your immigration status may be changed in the United States.

H-1: This visa classification applies to persons in a specialty occupation that requires the theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge requiring completion of a specific course of higher education. The H-1 requires a labor attestation issued by the Secretary of Labor and also applies to government-to-government research and development, or co-production projects administered by the Department of Defense. Those in H-1 status are allowed to stay a total of six years in H status, but will

only be approved for a maximum of three years at a time, at that point the postdoc will have to reapply to renew their H-1 visa status.

J-1: This visa is given to individuals who take part in a wide range of exchange visitor programs sponsored by schools, businesses, and a variety of organizations and institutions. A majority of postdocs at Columbia University are on J-1 visas. A postdoc is allowed to stay for up to three consecutive years with a J-1. Postdocs and any dependents with this visa status are not allowed to return to the United States in J-1 status for twelve months if the postdoc has been in the United States for more than six months in any J-1 status category within the last year and is not “extending” their status or “transferring” from one program to another based on the Exchange Visitor Program’s definition of “extending” or “transferring.”

O-1: This visa classification applies to persons who have extraordinary ability in the sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics, or extraordinary achievements in the motion picture and television field. O status can initially be granted for three years and can be renewed indefinitely in one-year increments by application to Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Those entering the United States to work should request the appropriate status (H-1, O-1) at the border once an I-797 approval notice has been received from DHS. Otherwise, you will be in Tourist (B-2) status and cannot be employed at Columbia. Canadians must have an I-94 card to confirm current H-1 or O-1 status, which is given by an immigration official at the time of entry into the United States. Applicants for an H-1 or O-1 visa will need their country’s passport and the original Form I-797 approval notice or a cable sent to the consulate stating that the requested status has been approved.

Completing Required Employment and Tax Forms

New postdocs will need to complete several employment and tax forms either prior to their start date or soon thereafter. Postdocs should consult with their faculty mentor and departmental administrator on which forms need to be completed. Depending on the postdoctoral appointment type, a postdoc may need to complete an I-9 employment verification form, a W-4 tax form, as well as one or more other tax forms that can be found on the [HR website](#). It should be noted that the I-9 employment verification form requires multiple forms of ID (e.g. driver’s license or passport). It is also typical for a postdoc to be required to sign hiring paperwork and/or return a signed copy of their official offer letter.

Obtaining a University ID Card

You should plan to pick up your University ID card on your first day on campus. [You must upload a photo](#) for your ID card prior to coming to campus to pick up the card. In addition to being your official employment ID, it is also used to borrow library books, gain admittance to campus buildings, ride University inter-campus shuttle buses, and utilize the gym. Anyone obtaining a University ID card for the first time must show a valid passport or U.S. ID.

Morningside ID Office

210 Kent Hall
1140 Amsterdam Ave
212.854.4400

[MSD ID Office Website](#)

Hours

Monday: 9am-5pm
Tuesday: 9am-4pm
Wednesday: 9am-5pm
Thursday: 9am-5pm

idcard@columbia.edu

Friday: 9am-5pm

CUIMC ID Office

Physicians and Surgeons
630 West 168th Street, Room 1-405C
212.305.0238

Hours

Monday: 9am-5pm
Tuesday: 9am-5pm
Wednesday: 9am-5pm
Thursday: 9am-5pm
Friday: 9am-5pm

Activating a Columbia UNI, Email, and Obtaining Domain Access

Every student, faculty member, and permanent staff member is assigned a University Network ID (UNI), consisting of your initials plus an arbitrary number. Not only is your UNI your main Columbia e-mail account (*i.e.*, uni@columbia.edu) but it also allows you to access computer services and electronic resources. You will also need your UNI to gain access to restricted library information on the Web, Human Resources and other University systems.

As soon as you receive your UNI, please [click here](#) to activate your account and set your password.

All CU faculty, staff and students may select an email alias. A number of choices are offered based upon a person's name as it appears in the CU Human Resources People @ Columbia (PAC) or the University Student system (SIS). To select, change, or remove an email alias, visit the [Manage My UNI page](#). Then click Select or Remove Email Alias.

In order to receive important postdoc information and notices about OPA events, all postdocs are automatically added to OPA's email list. **If you don't already receive weekly emails from OPA, send a request to: postdocaffairs@columbia.edu so you can be added to our email list.**

On the Medical Campus, domain accounts are used to log in to a work computer that has been connected to a "domain" or network and connected resources, such as a shared drive. Access to your departmental network or server (generally the logon you will use for your work computer itself) requires that you have a Domain Account assigned to you. Please contact CUIT for further information on this process.

Once your postdoc appointment ends, you may only have a limited grace period with your Columbia email account before it is closed. You may submit a request to the CUIT helpdesk to have an auto-response put into place for six months. In this case, no email is actually forwarded to your new email address but the sender will receive an auto-message telling the sender your new email address at which they can reach you.

Enrolling in Health Benefits

Enrolling in health as well as other benefits must occur within 31 days of an appointment start date at Columbia University. Please see the '[Compensation, Taxes, Benefits](#), and [Health Coverage](#)' sections of this handbook for further information.

Joining the Postdoc Email Listservs

OPA maintains a central email listserv that all postdocs in the University are automatically added to within a few weeks of starting at Columbia University. OPA does not allow postdocs to be removed from this listserv, as this is the only conduit with which important announcements and policy updates can be communicated across the postdoc community. **New postdocs should reach out to OPA (postdocaffairs@columbia.edu) if they are not receiving weekly emails from OPA so that they can be added to the listserv.**

In addition to the main postdoc listserv, postdocs may wish to join one of the four following mailing lists, which will give them the ability to send and receive messages within the group:

postdoc_social@lists.columbia.edu

Share, plan and discuss social events going on at Columbia or around the city. Connect with other CU postdocs. Invite other postdocs to attend social activities and events around New York City, or alert the community when something is happening at Columbia that is not hosted by OPA.

postdoc_equipment@lists.columbia.edu

Do you have a piece of equipment that you are not using in your lab? Do you need something, but don't know where to get it, or don't want to spend a lot of money purchasing something? Send an email to this list to see if anyone can help you out. Of course, all exchanges should be legal and allowed by your lab or PI. OPA does not endorse selling/collecting money through these lists.

postdoc_families@lists.columbia.edu

Get in touch with other postdocs who have children and families. Learn about events and social activities for parents, and kid-friendly events for families. Exchange opinions and recommendations for babysitters, schools, after school activities, etc.

postdoc_housing@lists.columbia.edu

Are you moving? Looking for housing? Post here and see if other members of the postdoc community have any information to share!

To Sign Up for the Mailing Lists:

Visit the following link(s) corresponding to the list(s) you would like to join.

https://lists.columbia.edu/mailman/listinfo/postdoc_social

https://lists.columbia.edu/mailman/listinfo/postdoc_equipment

https://lists.columbia.edu/mailman/listinfo/postdoc_families

https://lists.columbia.edu/mailman/listinfo/postdoc_housing

Fill out the form at the website, and submit it. Subscription to these lists requires approval, and you will be notified once our office approves your subscription. If you are using a non-Columbia email address, please also send an email to postdocaffairs@columbia.edu to alert us.

Once you are member, you will receive emails from other members. To send an email to the mailing lists, simply write an email to the appropriate email address (listed above).

To unsubscribe, visit the same website you used to subscribe to the mailing list. Scroll to the bottom of the page, where you will see an unsubscribe option.

Completing Required Trainings

Nearly every postdoc at Columbia will be required to undergo in person or online trainings to be in compliance with University, government, and funder regulations, particularly if they will be conducting research involving radiation, lasers, chemicals, animals, humans or human samples. Beyond required research related trainings, postdocs may need to complete University-mandated trainings, including a compliance training on HIPAA Privacy (mandatory for CUIMC staff), which can be found by clicking [here](#).

Postdocs can identify which research related trainings they may be obligated to undergo by filling out the form in [Training Finder](#) (you will need an active UNI to access this) and completing the trainings in person or through [RASCAL](#), as indicated.

Orientation

OPA hosts postdoc orientations in large groups as well as in one-on-one sessions. Large group orientations are announced on the events calendar section of the [OPA website](#) as well as in the OPA Weekly Digest email. New postdocs from any campus are welcome to attend any of the larger OPA-hosted orientations or may schedule a one-on-one orientation with Zammy Diaz Lebron by emailing her at: zdl2103@columbia.edu.

Living in New York City

As with any institution in the New York Metropolitan area, finding affordable housing is an ongoing challenge. At Columbia University, housing is available for postdocs. However, as University-owned housing is very limited, it is not guaranteed to postdocs. The University does provide some assistance in locating off-campus housing.

Only individuals holding titles of Postdoctoral Research Scientists/Scholars and Postdoctoral Research Fellows are eligible to apply for University housing.

Rent prices can vary widely in and around NYC. As a point of reference only, a typical monthly rent cost for a Columbia University postdoc living on or off-campus without roommates in a studio apartment might be between \$1450 and \$2000. Postdocs living with one or more roommates in a shared apartment on or off campus might typically pay as their share of monthly rent between \$800 and \$1300. It should be noted, though, that rent prices can easily exceed \$2000 per month for many apartments depending on the apartment location, apartment size, and amenities. Postdocs typically live on the Upper West Side, Morningside Heights, Harlem, Hudson Heights, Washington Heights, or Inwood. A number of postdocs live in other neighborhoods of Manhattan, or commute to campus from Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, Westchester County, or from New Jersey.

Neighborhoods to Live In

Upper West Side (UWS)

Spanning from Central Park West to the Hudson River and 60th to 96th Streets, the UWS has a distinct laid-back atmosphere attributed to the large student and artist population. Three major subway lines (1/2/3/A/C/B/D) run through the UWS, making it easily accessible to the rest of the City.

Morningside Heights

Bounded by Riverside Park to the west and Morningside Park to the east, Morningside Heights runs from 110th Street to 122nd Street. Although it is inextricably linked to Columbia University, it has retained its connections to neighboring Harlem. The 1 subway line provides quick access between Columbia's Morningside and Medical Center campuses.

Washington Heights/Inwood

Covering the entire northernmost part of Manhattan (anything north of 168th Street), Washington Heights and Inwood are two of the most affordable neighborhoods in Manhattan. They appeal to many who seek lower housing costs and beautiful parks. The A/C/1 subway lines allow reasonable commutes to lower Manhattan.

Riverdale

Over the recent years, Riverdale has attracted many families from Manhattan. It is a part of the Bronx, immediately north of Manhattan, and one can easily access the city via the 1 subway line, Metro North Rail and express buses.

Northern New Jersey

Due to the wealth of public transportation, Northern New Jersey has become a less expensive option for postdocs working at the Medical Center. Towns such as Fort Lee, Leonia, Englewood, Teaneck and Hackensack are easily accessible to the northern section of Manhattan and are quick bus ride across the George Washington Bridge. Columbia provides a shuttle bus from CUIMC to Fort Lee on weekdays. Click [here](#) for shuttle bus information.

Whichever neighborhood you decide to live in, it is imperative that you visit (or have someone visit for you) any room or apartment you are considering renting before you make any agreements or sign a lease.

Columbia University Housing

All postdoc housing information can also be found on the [Postdoctoral Housing Website](#).

For Postdocs based on the Morningside and Lamont campuses

Columbia Residential maintains housing for postdocs in some departments on the Morningside and Lamont campuses. Not all departments qualify for Columbia Residential Housing. The Columbia Residential [website](#) provides access to the Columbia housing application and up-to-date rent rates.

Columbia Residential
401 West 119th Street (between Amsterdam & Morningside Drive)
212.854.9300
Email: residential@columbia.edu
residential.columbia.edu

In order to submit a Columbia Residential housing application, you will need to create a [Housing Portal](#) account with an active UNI or personal email address. Columbia Residential receives all postdoc housing applications and submits them to the appropriate sponsoring department for review and approval. Housing assignments for postdocs on the Morningside campus are based on the date of receipt of your housing application and the availability of housing. Housing on the Morningside campus is limited and not available to postdocs in all departments. You must get approval from your department in order to qualify. Length of postdoc housing assignments vary based on department.

For Postdocs on the Medical Campus (CUIMC)

[The Office of Housing Services](#) facilitates housing for all postdocs working at the Medical Center. A random ordering of applications occurs each month and a lottery is then conducted on the 15th of each month to select assignees. The number of applicants selected is based on the number of housing units available each month. Current postdocs and new postdocs with a start date of no more than six weeks after the lottery can participate. To join the lottery, submit a completed [postdoctoral housing application](#) with a letter from your departmental administrator or sponsor that lists your title and appointment dates to the Office of Housing Services.

Successful applicants are eligible for assignment to University accommodations on either the Morningside or Medical Center campus and may continue to remain in University housing throughout the duration of their appointment or up to five years. However, in the event that the individual's employment status changes to part-time or to a non-postdoc eligible title he/she will be required to leave University housing within three months from when their status changes.

Contact Housing Leasing Manager Noemi Bueno at nb141@columbia.edu or call 212-304-7008 for more information.

The Office of Housing Services is also a resource for owned housing that is not owned by Columbia and can put you in touch with Columbia-approved management companies and brokers.

Office of Housing Services
212.304.7000
housingservices@cumc.columbia.edu

Housing FAQs

Click [here](#) for housing FAQs.

NYP Hospital Housing

CUIMC Postdocs may also be eligible for New York Presbyterian Hospital (NYP) Staff and Affiliate Housing. These housing units are located around NYP hospital and are managed independently from the

CUIMC Office of Housing Services. NYP housing assignments require the submission of a housing application form. Interested CUIMC postdocs should contact rcp-west@nyp.org or 212-305-2014. The NYP Real Estate Office is located at 600 W. 165th Street, 1H., New York, NY 10032. More information about their housing units can be found by clicking [here](#).

Off-Campus Housing Assistance (OCHA)

OCHA helps postdocs in their search for rental housing in non- Columbia-owned buildings located in the metropolitan area. OCHA maintains a [website](#) and an [online database](#) of available housing. It also provides contact information for landlords and lower- or no-fee brokers, temporary housing resources, lease review, and information and advice for the metropolitan area. They do not operate as a real estate or rental agency and do not charge for their services. However, some of the apartments listed in the OCHA database may charge a referral fee.

Off-Campus Housing Assistance (OCHA)

Email: residential@columbia.edu

Phone: 212-854-9300

Website: <https://residential.columbia.edu/offcampushousing>

New Postdocs may want to view the [housing section](#) of the postdoc affairs website for additional resources on off-campus housing, including average rental prices around the campuses.

Please note: OCHA does not screen either owners or tenants; apartments are not inspected or “approved” by Columbia or its employees. The listing of accommodations does not constitute recommendation of such facilities, nor is the accuracy of the description verified.

Temporary Housing

It may take one or two weeks to find an apartment once you arrive in New York. Unless you have family or friends who are willing to house you while you are looking, you may need to stay in a local hotel. Rates range depending on the hotel and time of year. Additionally, new postdocs may want to explore sublets or rooms for rent through sites such as Airbnb or Craigslist. *Please note: OPA does not endorse any non-University website or service, but is merely providing these third party sites as examples.*

Local Hotels

Columbia has [secured preferred rates at a number of local hotels](#). When making a reservation, please specify that you are calling from Columbia University and request the University rate. The preferred rate might not be available on certain dates in the year. Please inquire for those dates with the individual hotels.

Institutional Guest Rooms

Please note that the following may have a maximum stay of seven nights. Room prices change seasonally, so please call them directly for the most up-to-date rate information.

International House

500 Riverside Drive (at West 122nd Street)

212.316.8400

<https://www.ihouse-nyc.org/>

Housing through International House is independent of Columbia Residential and may be requested directly through the I-House application process. For more information, please contact I-House directly.

Teachers College - New Residence Hall

517 W 121st St

212.678.3235

<https://www.tc.columbia.edu/housing/student-housing/#tab-10268736>

Cell Phones

OPA strongly suggests getting a local cell phone number before you begin your apartment search. This will make you easy to reach and will maximize your chances of having your calls returned while looking for an apartment.

Columbia students, faculty, and staff are eligible to receive discounts from the following phone carriers. The account must be in your name to qualify. For more information, click [here](#).

There are two types of cell phone plans currently available in the United States:

Long-term: Purchase a phone; select a plan; and sign a (minimum) one-year contract. Credit card and social security numbers are usually required. If you do not yet have a social security number, some carriers will accept an additional deposit.

AT&T	www.wireless.att.com	800.331.0500
T-Mobile	www.t-mobile.com	800.866.2453
Verizon	www.verizonwireless.com	800.225.5499

Short-term: Purchase a pre-paid phone with no contract. You can pay monthly or buy phone cards with a certain number of minutes and reload the phone as needed.

Metro-PCS	www.metropcs.com	888.863.8768
AT&T	www.wireless.att.com	800.331.0500
T-Mobile	www.t-mobile.com	800.866.2453
Verizon	www.verizonwireless.com	800.225.5499
TracFone	www.tracfone.com	800.867.7183

Utilities (Electricity, Phone, Cable TV, Internet) in Manhattan

Typically, utilities included in rent are heat and hot/cold water. Electricity, cooking gas, phone, internet, and cable services are generally not included in rent. You will have to contact the utility company yourself to activate them once you rent an apartment. Utilities usually cost between \$70 - \$100 total per month for a studio apartment; \$75 - \$125 for a one-bedroom; and \$100 - \$125 for a two/three bedroom. You will also need to arrange for cable services if desired. In some instances, a digital TV antenna may suffice to receive a few local TV stations, though reception is usually poor in NYC.

Electricity

Con Edison

Phone: 800.752.6633

Website: www.conedison.com

Cable/High-Speed Internet

Spectrum

Phone: 1-855-366-7132

Website: <https://www.spectrum.com/>

Astound Broadband Powered By RCN

Phone: 800.427.8686

Website: <https://www.astound.com/new-york/>

Banking

The banks listed below are close to campus. The best way to get information is to visit the website or walk over in person. In order to open a bank account, please make sure you bring your Columbia ID and an official form of identification. Some banks will do limited time special discounts for the Columbia community. Please be sure to inquire when setting up an account.

Morningside Campus:

[Chase Manhattan](#)

350 West 125th Street

646.698.0579

Hours: Monday – Friday: 9 am – 5 pm, Saturday: 9 am – 2 pm

***Inquire about free checking for those who have direct deposit. Chase Manhattan also has an ATM at 2898 Broadway (at 113th Street).*

[Citibank](#)

2861 Broadway (at 111th Street)

646.434.0374

Hours: Monday – Friday: 9 am – 5 pm, Saturday: 10 am – 2 pm

***This location has 24-hour ATMs.*

CUIMC Campus:

[Bank of America](#)

4061 Broadway (at West 171st Street), New York, NY 10032

(917) 521-0431

Monday-Friday 10 am – 4 pm

[Chase Bank](#)

3940 Broadway, New York, NY 10032

(212) 740-4086

Monday-Friday 9 am – 5 pm, Saturday 9 am – 2 pm.

***Inquire about free checking for those who have direct deposit.*

Credit Cards

It is critical in the United States to establish and maintain a good credit history. Credit scores are checked when leasing an apartment, leasing or purchasing a car, buying an apartment or house, and even when being considered for a job. It is strongly advised that international postdocs without a US credit history explore ways to establish a good US credit history while in their postdoctoral training.

Citibank offers a Citi-Secured MasterCard (secured by an 18-month Certificate of Deposit) developed to meet the needs of individuals with no established credit or with little credit history, with or without either SSNs or ITINs. A postdoc can apply for the credit card the same day he/she opens a new account. In order to apply for a credit card you must be able to provide the following information:

- SSN or ITIN (if applicable)
- copy of a passport (that indicates country of issuance, passport #, issue and expiration date)
- current and valid Columbia ID or employee verification
- proof of address (phone bill, utility bill, bank statement or letter from school which provides your current address)
- Minimum \$1000 on deposit, which means that a postdoc has to have an account with Citibank.

Citibank also offers a Citi Card for Non-Permanent Resident Aliens. The underlying product is a Citi ThankYouSM Card and is specifically designed to meet the needs of Non-Permanent Resident Alien customers. This is the regular credit card that does not require the security of a CD. In order to apply for a credit card you must be able to provide the following information:

At least one ID (SSN, ITIN, Passport, National ID Card, or U.S. Driver License)

Letter verifying employment stating applicant name, established home address, phone number, title/position, date of employment, and salary

In order for the customer to be approved for the Citi Card, the customer must meet one of the following Banking Reference criteria:

- U.S. or non-U.S. Citibank or other U.S. personal bank account for at least 3 months with a current deposit balance of \$1,000 or average balance of \$1,000 for the past 3 months.
- Other non-U.S. personal bank account that has been open for at least 6 months with a current deposit balance of \$2000.

Safety and Security

The University's Office of Public Safety is responsible for maintaining campus security. Public Safety works very hard to continually improve upon the ways in which they serve our community. Their mission is to enhance the quality of life for the entire Columbia community by maintaining a secure and open environment in which the safety of all is balanced with the rights of the individual. You are welcome to visit their [website](#) for more information. You can also contact Public Safety using the phone numbers below.

Morningside: 212.854.2797
Manhattanville: 212.853.3301
Medical Center: 212.305.8100

Emergency Notification

To reach the Department of Public Safety for a security, fire or medical emergency dial:

Morningside: On campus - x4-5555 / Off campus - 212.854.5555

Manhattanville: On campus- x3-3333/ Off campus- 212.853.3333

Medical Center: On and off campus- 212.305.7979

To contact the New York City Police/Fire Department or Ambulance service dial 911.

Walking Alone

The Department of Public Safety provides escorts within the University vicinity. During the academic year, the Department utilizes trained student escorts to assist with this service between the hours of 6 pm and 6 am, depending on the campus. At all other times, Public Safety will dispatch a staff member to escort University affiliates within the designated surrounding area. A valid Columbia ID is required to obtain an escort. Please allow 10-15 minutes for your escort to arrive.

Morningside Campus: The Morningside Campus has a [free, on-demand evening shuttle](#) in partnership with Via to provide transportation services as an alternative to walking alone at night. The service ends at 3 am year-round, but start times vary depending on the month. You can find more information [here](#).

Get a [promo code](#) and [download the Via app](#) to use the shuttle

Manhattanville Campus: Call 212.853.3301 to request an escort. View [this calendar](#) for operating hours and [this map](#) for coverage area.

Columbia University Campus Maps

[Morningside Campus Map](#)

[Medical Center Map](#)

[Manhattanville Map](#)

Transportation Options

Subway and Buses

New York City's public transportation system runs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. By using the extensive subway and bus system, you have access to almost every corner of New York City and the surrounding boroughs. In 2022, the cost of a single ride on a NYC subway or bus is \$2.75 using a MetroCard, and you

can save money by purchasing rides in bulk or by buying 7-or 30-day unlimited ride MetroCards (\$33.00 and \$127.00, respectively). There is a \$1.00 one-time fee for purchasing a new MetroCard. Before you arrive on campus, it might be beneficial to familiarize yourself with the [public transportation system](#). When looking at apartments, take into consideration how far they are from the subways (1/A/C) that will get you to the Columbia campuses. A majority of postdocs live within a quick subway ride (or even walk) to campus. However, depending on where you live in NYC, you may find your commute time can average 20-60 minutes.

Biking and Driving

Biking is another popular way of getting around, especially around the Morningside campus. Bike riders should always wear a helmet while riding in City traffic and securely lock their bikes in recommended bike racks with a U-lock.

Owning a car is not recommended if living in NYC, particularly Manhattan, as it is very expensive to insure a car and parking is very difficult in New York City. Most New York City residents find the mass transit options more convenient and cheaper than driving a car to meet their daily commuting needs. Those living outside of NYC will likely find that owning or leasing a car is desirable or even necessary for shopping and commuting. Depending on where a postdoc may live outside of NYC, additional mass transit options may exist, including commuter rail service from Long Island (LIRR), Northern suburbs of NYC (Metro-North), and NJ (NJTransit). Additionally, postdocs residing close to the Hudson River (NJ), East River (Brooklyn/Queens), or on Staten Island may find that ferry service is a convenient transportation option to travel to Manhattan for additional connection to bus and subways to campus.

[Metro-North Schedules](#)

[Long Island Rail Road Schedules](#)

[Staten Island Railway Schedule](#)

[NJ Transit Schedules](#)

[Ferry Schedules](#)

Columbia Shuttles

Columbia offers seven shuttle services (six of which are free) for anyone with a valid Columbia ID. If the bus is not filled to capacity, it will typically take anyone else traveling between campuses. Shuttle locations should also be considered when searching for an apartment as they provide transportation for a route that may not be directly along a subway or bus line. Maps and shuttle routes can be found online [here](#).

Download the [Passio Go! App](#) to track where Columbia's shuttles are from your wireless or wifi-enabled mobile device without navigating to the Transportation website.

On-Demand Evening Shuttle: Columbia Transportation has partnered with Public Safety and Via to provide on-demand transportation service as an alternative to walking alone at night. More information can be found [here](#), and a map of the coverage area is available [here](#).

George Washington Bridge/Fort Lee Shuttle: Transports passengers between the Medical Center and the George Washington Bridge and further on to Fort Lee. The GWB/Ft. Lee shuttle runs Monday through Friday, excluding University holidays. Click [here](#) for routes and schedules.

Intercampus Shuttle: Provides service between Morningside campus, the Medical Center, Manhattanville

locations and Harlem Hospital. From the Medical Center you can then transfer to the GWB Shuttle. The shuttle operates Monday through Saturday, excluding University holidays. Click [here](#) for more information about the intercampus shuttle.

Lamont Shuttle: Transports passengers between the Morningside campus and the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory campus in Palisades, New York. This shuttle operates Monday through Friday, and it does not run on University holidays. Click [here](#) for more information about the Lamont Shuttle.

Community Shuttle: Provides free shuttle bus service for qualifying individuals via the ADA-accessible Intercampus shuttle. The shuttle connects 96th Street, the Morningside campus, the CU Irving Medical Center, and Harlem Hospital with stops at nearby subway and transit stops. Click here for more information.

Manhattanville Loop: Transportation between frequently visited locations on the Morningside and Manhattanville campuses. Click here for more information.

Child Care and Schooling

As per the [union contract](#), the University shall provide an annual lump sum payment to eligible Postdoctoral Research Fellows equivalent to that provided to Postdoctoral Research Scientists/Scholars.

Types of Early Child Care (typically 6 weeks to preschool/school aged)

[Center Based Early Child Care Programs](#)

Center based nursery schools and pre-schools provide care in a facility designed for this purpose. Each center differs in educational philosophies, structure, goals and activities, as well as the number of children enrolled. Children are usually grouped by age and classes vary size. Many centers have year-round and extended day programs at additional cost. Columbia University has nine affiliated nursery schools where Columbia University families receive priority for admissions. It is highly recommended to apply for admission as early as possible, as some facilities use waiting lists for individuals who are newly expecting but know they will need child care in the future.

Private Center based care for infants - age 2 can cost approximately \$3,000 per month

Private Center based care for children 2-5 years old can cost approximately \$2,300 per month

[In-Home Child Care](#)

Within home care, the child remains in their own home or that of a relative or friend. This position is typically filled by a nanny, au pair or babysitter who may live in or out of your home. In some cases, families enter a "nanny share" where the services are shared across children. This type of care allows you to be the employer and to determine the hours and the responsibilities. The best reference is from a colleague or personal friend who has used a specific nanny agency successfully or can give a personal reference for a specific person.

In home caregiver costs are approximately \$600 - \$900 per week (\$2,400 - \$3,600 per month)

Family and Group Family Child Care

Often less expensive than in-home care or child care centers, these programs are organized in small sized play groups (sometimes multi-age) with varying activities in a family environment. In New York City, the New York State Office of Children and Family Service (OCFS) licenses providers through the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Family child care provides care for up to six children ages six weeks to 12 years of age (no more than two children under two years of age) in a provider's home. Group family child care provides care for up to 12 children between the ages of 6 weeks and 12 years (no more than four children under the age of two) assisted by one or more aides. Family Daycare is between approximately \$450 - \$500 per week (\$2,000 per month)

For more information, including tips, information and interview sheets, agency recommendations, please click [here](#) or contact Carolyn Singer, via email at cs2921@columbia.edu or phone at 212-851-9184.

Back-Up Care Advantage Program

Please see the Benefits, '[Additional Benefits](#)', section of this handbook, for more information about this benefit.

Child Care Resources

Each year, Columbia hosts a fair for representatives of University-affiliated child care centers and other local facilities to share information and answer questions from parents living in the University's neighboring communities. The fair is generally held in early October in Lerner Hall. For further information e-mail Carolyn Singer (cs2921@columbia.edu).

University-Affiliated Child Care Centers

For information about University-Affiliated Child Care Center, please visit the following website [here](#).

Postdocs are encouraged to vet these options carefully and reach out to the [Office of Work Life](#) to assist in the process. Columbia University assumes no responsibility in connection with any of these programs and recommends that information listed therein be independently verified.

Barnard Babysitting Agency

Barnard College students offer a babysitting service. Parents must register with the program prior to posting a job. For more information, please click [here](#).

School Search Service

The School and Child Care Search Service provides expertise and guidance as you explore your early education and child care or K-12 schooling options. This service arranges for individual consultations or individuals may independently use the Search Service's web program to search for schools in any of the City's boroughs or Westchester or Bergen Counties. Please visit their [website](#) for additional details about their services.

Compensation, Taxes, Benefits, Discounts, and Resources

Compensation

Please consult Article 5 of the [Union contract](#) for details regarding compensation.

It should be noted that Lamont postdocs have a different minimum compensation level that is greater than the levels set forth by the Provost. Lamont postdocs should consult with their departmental administrator for further information. Postdoctoral research fellows should note that if their stipend from an external fellowship is below the stipend minimum established by the Provost, they will need to receive a supplement from their host PI or department to bring their compensation level to at least the minimum level in order to be appointed at the University.

Taxes

Please note: The staffs of ISSO and OPA are neither qualified nor permitted to answer individual questions from any postdoc regarding their tax liabilities. They strongly suggest that you seek outside, professional advice when filing your tax forms.

International Scholars

During the tax year, January 1 to December 31, most individuals who are employed in the United States have taxes withheld from their earnings by their employer. By April 15th of the following year, these individuals have to file an “income tax return” with the federal tax authorities and also with the tax authorities in the state(s) in which he/she was employed. A tax return reports your income and either requests a refund if more tax was withheld than is required, or may require you to pay additional taxes that are owed. The Internal Revenue Service is the US government agency responsible for the collection of federal income taxes.

Non-immigrant scholars in J-1 status (both the principal and all dependents) who are considered “nonresidents for tax purposes” may be required to file an individual income tax form, even if they had no U.S.-source income of any kind, so long as they were in the United States for any part of the tax year. Generally, scholars in J-1 status are considered nonresidents for tax purposes for a period of two “tax years” and become residents for tax purposes after any parts of 2 years. If your visa status changes before July 3 in a given year, you are usually considered a dual status taxpayer and must file a dual status return (Regarding dual status – if you were a resident last year and leave the country this year, the period before you leave you continue to be a resident for any time period in the US. You would then become a non-resident with no taxable income after you leave).

A resident alien for tax purposes is someone who is a permanent resident in the United States, i.e. has a “green card,” or someone who was “substantially present” in the United States. Substantial presence is based on the number of days the person is in the United States over a period of several years.

If you do not have U.S.-source income: A J-1 scholar who is a nonresident for tax purposes with no U.S.-source income (and no dependents) must file federal *Form 8843* (Statement for Exempt Individuals and Individuals with a Medical Condition) only. Interest earned on bank accounts is NOT considered income for this purpose. Scholars complete Part I (General Information) and Part II (Teachers and Trainees) of the

form.

If you have U.S.-source income: If you are a nonresident for tax purposes with U.S.-source income, you usually must file federal *Form 1040NR* or *1040NR-EZ* (U.S. Nonresident Alien Income Tax Return) and *Form 8843* (Statement for Exempt Individuals and Individuals with a Medical Condition). Depending on the amount of income, you may also need to file a state return. The corresponding New York State forms for nonresidents are the *IT-203*, the *IT-203B* and the *IT-2*. New York may consider you a resident for tax purposes and require you to file form *IT-201* regardless of your federal tax status. NJ does not recognize tax treaties and considers you a resident as long as you live there.

Dependents: Usually, spouses of F-1 and J-1 scholars in F-2 and J-2 status must file *Form 8843* (Statement for Exempt Individuals and Individuals with a Medical Condition) in all cases whether the scholar has U.S. income or not. J-2 dependents complete Part I only. Very few countries allow you to claim dependents as a non-resident including your spouse.

Withholding: This is the term used to describe a portion of your paycheck amount that an employer is required to pay directly to federal, state, and city taxation authorities in anticipation of your annual income tax obligations. The check you receive, therefore, is for less than you earned during the pay period. The amounts withheld are credited toward your tax bill so that most taxpayers will have to pay relatively little additional money at annual tax filing time, and many will qualify for a refund of money over-withheld.

Tax treaties: Currently the United States has tax treaties or agreements with roughly 55 countries and territories under which their citizens may be exempt from all or part of U.S. income tax. To see if your country is among these and how a treaty may affect your tax status, see IRS publication #901 U.S. Tax Treaties on the [IRS website](#) or pick up a copy at the ISSO. However, note that when you use the web-based nonresident tax preparation system Sprintax (described elsewhere), it will determine tax treaty eligibility and applicability according to your nationality and source of income. Also, you may qualify for Tax Treaty benefits even if you are a US resident for tax purposes and if you are exempt from US taxes by treaty, you may be required to file a return with your home country. Lastly, some but not all states recognize Tax Treaty benefits. Neither New Jersey nor Connecticut recognizes tax treaties.

Tax Submission Deadline, April 15: The last day to file an annual tax return with the IRS. Tax returns should be postmarked by this date.

FICA: A separate tax issue is Social Security tax, also known as FICA. Recent changes in tax regulations make most holders of J-1 Visa subject to FICA tax withholding if they are “residents for tax purposes.” In general, J-1 holders become “residents for tax purposes” after two years. H-1 and O-1 holders are almost always subject to FICA withholding.

If FICA has been withheld in error, the employer must provide a refund. The employer applies for reimbursement by filing a claim on Form 941C with IRS. If you are unable to obtain a refund in this way, you can file a claim on *Form 843* and *Form 8316*. Send your claim to:

Internal Revenue Service Center
Austin, TX 73301-0215.

SPRINTAX

Sprintax is free for you to use for your federal tax forms when you login from the ISSO web page using your Columbia UNI and password. You can find more tax related information on their [website](#).

Students and Scholars Who Are Residents for Tax Purposes

If you have been in the United States for more than five years as a student or two years as a scholar, you no longer qualify as a nonresident and may be required to file taxes as a resident alien. If so, Sprintax will let you know that you are considered a resident for tax purposes and will not complete the nonresident forms. However, you may be able to use software designed for residents for tax purposes. (In this case you may want to refer to a tax preparation site such as *TurboTax* or www.taxact.com).

Postdoctoral Fellows

OPA strongly suggests that postdoctoral fellows review the [National Postdoc Association \(NPA\) website regarding tax issues for postdocs](#). Postdoctoral fellows will find many of their tax related questions have been addressed by the information provided on the NPA site.

Estimated Tax Payments: Postdoc research fellows and clinical fellows paid through a stipend do not have taxes taken out of their stipend payments. Fellowships *without* automatic tax withholding are still subject to the IRS requirement that income tax be paid on a regular basis throughout the tax year and not all at once at the end of the year. Thus, postdocs without withholding may be required to make estimated tax payments each quarter in order to avoid a penalty. Use IRS [Form 1040ES](#) for estimated federal tax calculations and payments, and find the equivalent form for estimated state taxes (where applicable).

Postdoc Fellow Tax Filing and Imputed Income: Most Postdocs on fellowships also have to also file a tax return between January 15th and April 15th for the previous tax year. Postdoc research and clinical fellows (paid through a stipend) may receive a W-2 or 1099-MISC form reporting their total fellowship income, or they may receive no summary form at all. In any case, a tax return must be filed and the fellowship stipend amount should be reported with gross income. Also, please be aware that if all or a portion of your health and/or dental benefits are being paid for by your fellowship allowance, training grant related expense account, department, or P.I., this amount is considered taxable income (imputed income) per IRS regulations and will be included on your W-2 or 1099-MISC.

FICA: Stipends are not treated as wages or self-employment income and, therefore, are not subject to FICA taxes, (i.e. social security and Medicare). Also, special rules regarding taxation and withholding apply to postdoctoral fellows who are in the United States as nonresident aliens.

Please note: *We encourage you to consult with a personal accountant or tax advisor regarding the potential tax consequences from their receipt of stipends since Columbia and the OPA cannot provide individual tax advice.*

Benefits

The University provides a number of benefits to postdocs, however, eligibility for each benefit will depend on the type of appointment the postdoc holds. Per the [Union contract](#), the University reserves the right to modify benefits after notice to the Union, provided that such benefits are substantially equivalent to those

provided to other similarly situated employees.

Postdoctoral Fellows may find details regarding 2023 benefits [here](#).

Postdocs are encouraged to attend a new employee orientation to gain more information about available benefits. Benefits related questions can be addressed by contacting the Columbia Benefits Service Center. Contact information for this office has been provided below for reference. Additional information can also be found on the [HR Benefits website](#).

Columbia Benefits Service Center

615 W. 131st St
Studebaker Building, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10027
Phone: 212.851.7000, option 8
Fax: 212.851.7025
hrbenefits@columbia.edu

Health Coverage

Postdoc health benefits can be determined, in large part, by their title.

A postdoctoral research scientist/scholar and postdoctoral clinical fellow (who is a full-time Assistant in Clinical Department), as an employee, has fringe benefit costs charged to their salary and is able to choose from among the various plans offered to all other officers at the University.

Columbia offers UnitedHealthCare (UHC) Choice Plus 80, 90, and 100 plans, as well as a High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP). Specifics on each plan are available in the University's "[Health and Welfare Benefits](#)" website.

Postdoctoral research fellows and postdoctoral clinical fellows paid via a stipend do not have fringe benefit costs charged to their stipend and thus are not eligible for several benefits that are offered to employees of the University. The University does offer an affordable health plan option for Fellows through a UHC Choice Plus 80 blended rate plan. Further information about the Fellow health benefits plan can be found [here](#). More information on this policy can be found on the [Provost webpage](#). Fellows are obligated to carry health insurance, either through the University-administered UHC Choice Plus 80 plan or through an external plan of their choosing, and must attest to maintaining health care coverage for the duration of their tenure at Columbia.

Please note: Postdocs in J-1 status and their dependents are required to have comprehensive medical coverage in order to fulfill U.S. government regulations governing the J Exchange Visitor status.

Mental Health and Grief Counseling

IF YOU ARE IN CRISIS, CALL 911 OR GO DIRECTLY TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM.

[Mental Health Resources](#)

There are several mental health clinics and practices near the CUIMC and MSD campuses that can assist postdocs with mental health counseling needs. To view a list of these resources, please click [here](#). Other crisis resources are listed below.

[Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - 988](#)

The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress as well as prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones. You can call or text 988 to connect to a trained crisis counselor. You can also use the Lifeline online chat function [here](#).

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Postdoc Research Scientists and Scholars and Postdoctoral Research Fellows are also eligible to for assistance through the EAP. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides a network of free specialized services: short-term counseling to help you and your household members cope with everyday issues such as stress, work/life balance, relationships, depression, drug and alcohol addiction, wellness and the management of adult/elder care responsibilities, among others. More information can be found on the [EAP website](#). The Office of Work/Life works with the EAP to host free workshops each semester on a variety of topics ranging from adult/elder caregiving and Medicare to stress management. For more information about the Office of Work/Life and EAP programming, check out the Office of Work/Life [wellness website](#).

Grief Counseling

All postdocs are eligible to receive grief counseling from the Office of the [University Chaplain](#).

Dental Coverage

All Postdocs are eligible for Columbia dental insurance.

Aetna Columbia Dental Plan

The Aetna Columbia Dental Plan is administered through Columbia Human Resources and all full-time postdocs are eligible to sign up for this plan. The cost for the plan will vary depending on your appointment as a salaried postdoc or a stipend postdoc. For more information, please visit the [HR Benefits website](#).

Columbia Student Dental Plan

A lower cost dental plan is available through the School of Dental and Oral Surgery and is provided by dentists enrolled in a postgraduate fellowship program. It covers semi-annual oral cleanings and examinations, x-rays, and prophylaxis. There is a 25% discount on non-covered services. All postdocs are eligible to sign up for this plan. For more information, click [here](#).

Time Off (Vacation, Sick Time, Personal Days, and University Holidays)

Postdoctoral research scientists/scholars and postdoctoral clinical fellows (who are full-time Assistants in Clinical Department), earn two days of vacation for each month of their appointment, up to a maximum of twenty-three days. These postdocs also earn either 2 or 3 personal days per year depending on the campus

with which they are affiliated. Click [here](#) for more information. They also are eligible for all University holidays. See the [University holiday schedule](#). Vacation time is not accrued during extended leaves approved by the University (e.g., child care leaves). Vacation time may not be accumulated beyond June 30 of the year following the one in which it was earned. Unused vacation time cannot be translated into monetary pay except upon termination of appointment. Postdocs should consult with their departmental administrator on relevant policies around tracking time off as well as around sick time policies.

Postdoctoral research and clinical fellows are entitled to the same rights to vacation and time off as postdoctoral research scientists/scholars unless the provisions of the granting agency specify otherwise.

Leaves of Absence (Medical, Child Care (and other Dependent) Leave)

Per Article 15 in the [Union contract](#), employees shall be entitled to leaves of absence as per the University policies for Officers of Research outlined in the current Faculty Handbook, as required by law, and according to the Union contract. The University has the right to modify leave policies after notice to the Union, provided that such leave policies are substantially equivalent to those provided to other similarly situated employees. See Article 15 in the Union contract for additional information.

Birth Parent, Parental, and Child Care Leaves

Birth Parent Leave: A full-time officer of research who is pregnant is entitled to a medical leave of absence, according to the policies described [above](#) and in the [Faculty Handbook](#), for the period surrounding the birth of their child during which their doctor certifies that they are unable to work (typically 6-8 weeks postpartum).

Paid Parental Leave: Effective January 1, 2021, full-time Employees who have worked at Columbia University for a minimum of one year and who become a parent of a newborn child or adopt (or foster) a child under the age of six during the term of their appointment may be granted up to six weeks of paid parental leave at full salary, unless such leave is explicitly restricted by an external source of funding for the Employee's compensation. The six weeks of paid parental leave at full salary will run concurrently with, not in addition to, New York State Paid Family Leave.

To qualify for a leave, the Employee must assume significant and sustained responsibility for the care of the child and is expected to be the caregiver at least half-time during normal working hours throughout the period of the leave. This leave may be taken within the first 12 months of the birth, adoption, or foster placement of the child. The original source of the funding for the Employee's compensation will continue to be responsible for covering the compensation during the time of the leave.

After the period of parental leave at full salary, the Employee may take further leave as granted under Federal and New York State Laws, including the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the New York State Paid Family Leave Law, and/or University policies.

New York State Paid Family Leave: The University shall comply with the New York State Paid Family Leave Law (NYS PFL). Under NYS PFL, full-time Employees who have worked at least 26 consecutive weeks are eligible for up to 12 weeks of job-protected partial paid leave (at 67% of their average weekly wage) to bond with their child during the first 12 months after the child's birth, adoption, or foster care placement. Please refer to the [New York Paid Family Leave](#) page for more information.

Child Care Leave: Full-time Employees may request an extended leave without pay or with partial pay to care for a newborn or adopted child if they are the primary caregiver. If the Employee does not perform any responsibilities during the leave, then the leave is without salary. With the approval of the principal investigator, department chair or director, dean or vice president, and the Provost, the officer may continue to perform a portion of her normal responsibilities on a leave with partial salary.

The total period of birth parent leave (if applicable), parental leave, and child care leave may not exceed 12 months.

Male officers of research holding full-time appointments may also take full or partial leaves for up to 12 months to care for a newborn child if they are the primary caregiver. Similar privileges are given to all full-time research officers who adopt a child of less than school age, if the child is disabled or meets New York State's legal definition of "hard-to-place," or is less than 18 at the time the leave begins.

Full-time postdoctoral and clinical fellows may take a child care leave without stipend or with partial stipend according to the policies described above if permitted by the rules of the funding agency.

All leaves covered under this section count as use of time for which an Employee is eligible under FMLA and NYS PFL. FMLA and NYS PFL will run concurrently for any Employee who is eligible for both.

FMLA Leave

Full- and part-time officers of research are entitled to leaves of absence under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 if they have been employed and paid by the University for at least 12 months immediately preceding the leave and have worked for at least 1,250 hours during that period. Any compensated employment, regardless of title and including periods on the casual payroll, counts in determining if an officer meets these requirements. Postdoctoral research and clinical fellows who receive stipends as well as postdoctoral residency fellows are not eligible for this type of leave.

Officers of research who meet those requirements may take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave in each year to care for a newborn, newly adopted, or new foster child; to care for a seriously ill family member; or as a result of a medical disability. They may take up to 26 weeks if the leave is needed to deal with a qualifying exigency, as defined by the federal Department of Labor, arising out of the military service of a spouse, child, or parent. The University's policies governing the leaves of absence that full-time officers of research may take for these purposes are, with the exception of certain benefits provisions, more generous than the requirements of the FMLA. Consequently, the University considers the first 12 weeks of any such leave as fulfilling the requirements of the Family and Medical Leave Act, except for leaves arising from a family member's military service, in which case it counts the first 26 weeks.

Further information on the Family and Medical Leave Act can be found [here](#).

*Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory (LDEO)

LDEO offers full-time PDFs the same parental (disability) paid leave as full-time PDRs. Typically, this is 6-8 weeks, depending on the type of delivery and medical professional certification. There is no paid paternity leave, but as Columbia University policy allows, Officers of Research can take unpaid child care leave.

You can also reach out to the Office of Leave Management for more details regarding leave. Office information below.

Office of Leave Management

615 W. 131st St, Mail Code 8703

Studebaker, 4th Floor

New York, NY 10027

Phone: 212.851.0698

Email: leavemanagement@columbia.edu

Breastfeeding Support and Lactation Rooms

Columbia University, together with the Office of Work Life, provides breastfeeding support to all mothers. You can find more information about this supportive service on the [Office of Work/Life website](#). In addition to support programs, the Office of Work Life also maintains lactation rooms across all campuses. For more information on accessing these rooms, please click [here](#). It is strongly encouraged to contact the Office of Work Life at 212.854.8019 at least 5 days in advance of the time you need to access the rooms to determine availability; however, they will do their best to accommodate same and next-day requests.

Additional Benefits

Back-Up Care Advantage Program

Provides care for anyone you have responsibility toward, when normal arrangements are disrupted and/or when you need to provide short-term care. The program provides you up to 200 hours per year of back-up care. There is no cost to register for the Back-Up Care Advantage program and Columbia University covers most of the costs for back-up care, except for the following copays: \$3/hour co-pay per child for Center-Based Childcare; \$7/hour co-pay for the first 50 hours of in-home care, \$9/hour for hours 51-100 hours, and \$12/hour for hours 101-150. There is a 4-hour minimum for the in-home care option. For more information, please visit the Back-Up Care [website](#).

Transit/Parking Reimbursement Program (T/PRP)

The T/PRP is a convenient way to pay commuting expenses using pre-tax dollars. You may participate in either the Transit or Parking Reimbursement Program – or both. The T/PRP allows you to set aside pre-tax dollars each paycheck to pay for commuting expenses. You choose a monthly election, which is available to you as of the first of each month. Your contributions will then be deducted in equal installments from your semi-monthly paychecks in the same month. You may enroll in the T/PRP at any time during the year. If you would like to newly enroll in or make a change to your T/PRP account, you must do so during Open Enrollment, or your election will not be in place for January 1. This benefit, however, is easy to change during the year.

For more information and examples of eligible expenses, visit the [Transit/Parking Reimbursement program website](#).

Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs)

FSAs allow you to set aside pre-tax money to reimburse yourself for eligible healthcare and dependent day care expenses. You must enroll within 31 days of hire and you must also re-enroll during Benefits Open Enrollment each year to take advantage of FSAs.

Columbia University offers two types of FSAs that are administered by UHC:

Healthcare FSA for eligible healthcare expenses, including medical, prescription drug or dental copays and deductibles, as well as vision or hearing services.

Dependent Care FSA for eligible child or adult day care expenses for your dependents, such as licensed day care centers and nursery schools, before-school or after-school programs and home attendants. (Note: for dependents' health-related expenses, use the Healthcare FSA.)

Child Care Benefit: Eligible Officers can elect to receive up to a \$4,000 contribution from Columbia to a Dependent Care FSA. If you elect this benefit during the year because of a Qualified Life Status Change, you will receive a prorated portion of the benefit. To be eligible for this benefit, you must meet all of the eligibility criteria below:

- Be a full-time, benefits-eligible Officer with an Annual Benefits Salary of less than or equal to \$135,000 (\$130,000 prior to January 1, 2022).
- Have a dependent child under the age of 6 (age 5 prior to January 1, 2022) and not yet attending kindergarten who has been verified as an eligible dependent; and meets the IRS definition of a tax dependent.
- Elect to participate in the Child Care Benefit as a new hire, during the annual Open Enrollment period or if you experience a Qualified Life Status Change.

There is a limit of a single benefit per family regardless of the number of eligible children, and regardless of whether both parents are eligible Non-Union Support Staff. If you receive the Child Care Benefit, you can also contribute personal pre-tax payroll contributions to their Dependent Care FSA. The total contributions between the Dependent Care FSA and the Child Care Benefit cannot exceed \$5,000 annual maximum.

For more information, please visit the [FSA website](#).

Retirement Accounts

Postdoctoral Research Scientists and Scholars are eligible to participate in Columbia's Voluntary Retirement Savings Program (VSRP), a defined contribution 403(b) plan that allows employees to contribute between 1% to 80% of their eligible salary through pre-tax contributions, or in the case of Roth IRAs, on a post-tax basis, in whole percentages through convenient payroll contributions.

All hires on or after July 1, 2013 will be automatically enrolled to contribute 3% of their salary on a pre-tax basis to the VSRP if they do not make a contribution election. Employees can opt out or change this automatic election at any time.

Columbia University will match pre-tax and Roth savings combined to a maximum of 3% of eligible pay, once an employee has met the eligibility requirements, including a 2-year vesting period (matching contributions are allocated to the Postdoc's Retirement Plan).

For more information and financial planning resources, visit the [HR retirement savings and financial planning website](#).

Life Insurance

Life insurance can provide valuable financial protection and Columbia University offers you the choice of different levels of coverage to help meet your needs. Columbia offers two Term Life Insurance Plans: the Basic Term Life Insurance Plan and the Optional Term Life Insurance Plan.

Basic Term Life Insurance Plan

The Basic Term Life Insurance Plan is provided automatically to Postdoctoral Research Scientists and Scholars and Postdoctoral Research Fellows by Columbia University at no cost to you. You will automatically receive Basic Term Life Insurance of one times your Annual Benefits Salary, up to \$50,000. The Life Insurance Plan pays a lump sum benefit to your beneficiary in the event of your death while actively employed by Columbia University. The Plan also can pay a living benefit. If you become terminally ill, you may elect to have the Plan pay out a benefit while you are still living. Any amount you receive will reduce the benefit paid to your beneficiary.

Postdoctoral Fellows, please note: Although this benefit is provided at no cost to you, IRS Regulations require the University to treat this benefit as imputed income. This cost will be approximately \$3.30/month or \$39.60/year. For more information, please click [here](#).

Optional Term Life Insurance Plan

Postdoctoral Research Scientists and Scholars may elect additional amounts of coverage of one, two, three, four, five or six times your Annual Benefits Salary up to a maximum of \$1,750,000, including your Basic Term Life Insurance coverage amount. The additional amounts of coverage are paid with post-tax dollars. The benefit will be determined using your Annual Benefits Salary rounded to the next highest \$1,000. You will see your personal monthly premiums on the CU Benefits Enrollment System based on your age as of January 1. There, you can also add or update beneficiaries. For more information, please click [here](#).

Student Loan Deferral

Currently only Postdoctoral Fellows at the Medical Center can bring their loan deferment forms to the Office of Faculty Affairs (Black Building, Room 126) for approval. However, please note that lending agencies may differ in their requirements and will make the final determination of eligibility.

American Language Program

All Post-docs are eligible for tuition exemption for one part-time program per semester through the American Language Program (excludes activity fee, instructional support fee, and technology fee). Tuition exemption instructions can be found [here](#). Visit [the ALP program website](#) for more information about this program. Postdocs are currently eligible for any of the three Part-Time English Programs. You can apply to this program [online](#) or by emailing the admissions director at alp@columbia.edu. Postdocs should also be sure to decline the student health insurance! This is VERY important. If you do not decline the health insurance, you will be charged for it. **Please refer to [this document](#) for more information on the medical insurance waiver.**

Gym Facilities

All postdocs are eligible to use the exercise facilities on either campus for a nominal fee.

Dodge Fitness Center – Morningside Campus

The Marcellus Hartley Dodge Physical Fitness Center is the most comprehensive wellness facility on the Upper West Side. It offers everything from yoga and kickboxing to kayaking and squash instruction. Dodge also has trained personal trainers on staff for individual sessions. Facilities include an indoor running track, 25-yard pool, Scandinavian sauna, multi-sport gymnasium, and a tri-level fitness center with the latest cardiovascular and strength training equipment. Children of all ages and interests can now enjoy a variety of sports camps and Cubs Camp programs offered throughout the entire year.

Bard Athletic Center – Medical Center Campus

Bard Athletic Center is a comprehensive physical fitness facility that is accessible for students with disabilities. It includes a 15-yard pool, gymnasium, cardiovascular and strength/weight training equipment. Bard also has an aerobic studio, 3 squash courts and saunas. Clinical Fellows and Residency Fellows don't qualify for the Fellow Package.

The basic membership for employees, associates, scholars, alumni and neighbors includes the usage of a temporary locker and towel service. All members may also rent a locker for the duration of membership, bring guests, or have a spouse/domestic partner or child (ages 6-18) join as a member (additional fee required). For a spouse/domestic partner membership, proof of common residence or a marriage certificate is required. Guests and family members are provided with a temporary locker and towel service.

Libraries

At your disposal is a fully integrated research library. Columbia's Libraries, with 9.5 million volumes, 117,264 current serials, and an extensive collection of electronic resources, manuscripts, rare books, microforms and other non-print formats, ranks it as one of the top ten academic library systems in the nation. Spouses and domestic partners of postdocs may use Columbia's libraries.

CU Arts Initiative

Outside the University, your ID card is your passport to New York City and can help you take advantage of all the excitement the City has to offer through certain programs and discounts. Please visit the [Arts Initiative at Columbia University website](#) for the most up-to-date list of free museums and other cultural events.

Work/Life at Columbia University

The Office of Work/Life at Columbia offers a variety of programs to help you keep both your family life and your career running smoothly. The office also offers adult care and child care resources, parenting resources, a housing referral service, health and wellness resources, and information about discounts and perks available to postdocs. See below for information about this office.

The Office of Work/Life

Low Library, North Balcony
535 W. 116th St, Mail Code 4337

New York, NY 10027
Phone: 212.854.8019
Website: www.worklife.columbia.edu

Business Cards

With departmental approval, all Postdocs may order business cards through Columbia Print. Orders can be placed at:

Morningside Campus 106 Pulitzer Hall 2950 Broadway	or	CUIMC Hammer Science Building 701 West 168th Street, 2nd Fl #610
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Please find the approval and order form [here](#).

Career and Professional Development

Overview of Postdoctoral Career and Professional Development Program

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) has built a highly structured postdoctoral career and professional development curriculum consisting of a variety of short courses, seminar series, intensive workshops, and individualized support. The programming is run annually so that postdocs can build these programs into their training plans while at Columbia University. In addition to the more structured curriculum, OPA also organizes stand-alone workshops and events throughout each year.

The structured postdoctoral training program focuses on broad areas that align with four of the six core competencies identified by the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) as being critical for successful postdoctoral training. The Columbia postdoctoral training program focuses on professionalism, leadership and management, communication, career management, and responsible conduct of research. Two of the six (NPA) core competencies, discipline-specific conceptual knowledge and research skill development, are largely areas that postdocs should receive training on through their PI, mentor, or on their own, and are not widely encompassed in the OPA postdoctoral training program. The OPA structured postdoctoral training program will enable postdocs to achieve the following postdoctoral training program goals:

- Recognize the significance of independent career management
- Actively participate in the postdoctoral training program for the duration of training
- Gain insights into a variety of career options available and engage in training and education activities necessary to gain employment in a preferred career track
- Receive professional and career development necessary for employment in a wide-range of sectors
- Adhere to professional and ethical codes of conduct during training at Columbia
- Hone leadership, management, and communication skills necessary for PhD level positions across a variety of career sectors
- Transition from training to independence

Courses, Workshops, and Series

OPA offers a number of programs, short courses, series, and workshops. These include an Individual Development Plan (IDP) program, an academic application boot camp, a career panel series, a career advancement series, and funding strategies workshops, among others. While most programs are offered annually, programming varies from year to year. Additional workshops are offered throughout the year as well.

There are also several courses at Columbia organized by other offices and programs that postdocs are welcome to participate in, including: a funding and grant-writing course and a responsible conduct of research (RCR) course .

Information on all of OPAs programs, as well as additional programs of interest to postdocs, may be found on [OPA's career development website](#). Upcoming events can be found on the [OPA Calendar](#).

Many of OPA's popular workshops have been recorded and are accessible [here](#).

Networking and Employer Events

Beyond the courses, workshops, and series, OPA also organizes a number of networking and employer events throughout the year. These include career panels with a focus on non-academic and academic careers, employer on-campus recruitment/information sessions, as well as employer site visits. OPA also advertises internship and employment opportunities throughout the year.

Career Counseling Services

OPA provides individualized career counseling services throughout the year. Individual appointments can be scheduled for review of job documents (resumes, CVs, cover letters), mock interviews, or can focus on career exploration and career management. Appointments must be scheduled by emailing postdocaffairs@columbia.edu with your appointment request.

Postdoc Career Network (PCN)

The Columbia University Postdoc Career Network (PCN) is a tool that aims to give postdocs of all disciplines the information they need to decide on their future career paths and to better negotiate their job offers. Postdocs can use PCN to learn more about which industries and companies former CU postdocs have gone on to, the starting salaries associated with these offers, and which companies sponsor visas.

In setting up your PCN account, you will be joining a nationwide push for data transparency by helping other postdocs understand what to expect when they are on the job market and negotiating. Your personal information is kept strictly confidential, and the platform's security has been vetted by CUIT.

Visit [the PCN website](#) to find out more and activate your account!

Postdoctoral Wellness

The Wellness branch of the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs is dedicated to providing mental health and wellness education and outreach that focuses on multiple areas of wellness, such as social, physical, emotional, and occupational wellness, among others. Through these wellness initiatives, postdocs can develop tools and knowledge to care for their mental health and well-being during their postdoctoral training and beyond. With enhanced knowledge and resources, postdocs are empowered to create meaningful adjustments to support their well-being.

- Individual Wellness Appointments
 - Postdocs can schedule 1-on-1 wellness appointments to develop wellness goals or discuss resources that may be helpful in meeting specific wellness needs. Additionally, PIs or other faculty and staff members are able to schedule individual appointments to discuss postdoctoral wellness needs. Please email OPA Wellness Director, Anna Womack, at ajw2208@cumc.columbia.edu to schedule an individual wellness appointment.
- Wellness Workshops and Mini-Challenges
 - Each month, the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs organizes a wellness workshop or seminar focusing on an area of wellness such as, physical, social, emotional, or intellectual wellness. OPA Wellness also organizes Mini-Challenges each month to encourage postdocs to enhance their wellness via low-time-commitment activities.
- Weekly Wellness
 - OPA coordinates two weekly events for postdoctoral physical wellness: Zumba and yoga. Please contact postdocaffairs@columbia.edu for further details, including the reoccurring Zoom links.
- Monday Mindful Moment
 - The “Monday Mindful Moment” is a brief 30-minute session, held on the third Monday of each month, that allows busy postdocs to learn about and practice helpful mindfulness skills.

Communications on OPA Programming and Services

Announcements about all OPA organized programming are sent to postdocs through the postdoc mailing list every Tuesday in the 'weekly digest' email. Programs are advertised several weeks in advance to provide ample time to register. These events and programs are also posted on the [OPA events calendar](#) and on [OPA's LinkedIn page](#).

There are also a large number of events and programs that occur throughout the year that are not organized by OPA, but are of interest to postdocs. We advertise these events in the 'weekly listings' email that is sent to postdocs every Thursday. We also highlight a specific piece of information relevant to postdoctoral training experience in our weekly 'did you know' email each Friday. Postdocs should receive these weekly emails. If you are not receiving these emails, please contact OPA (postdocaffairs@columbia.edu) as this likely means you are not on the postdoc email listserv.

Teaching and Internships

With the proper approvals, postdocs are allowed to engage in limited teaching and other career development activities (e.g. limited internship opportunities) that merit additional compensation. A new policy supporting engagement in these activities along with an approval process was established in 2016 and can be viewed [here](#).

Postdocs should address any questions related to these policies to the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs **prior to** engaging in any career development activity that merits additional compensation.

Additional Resources

OPA has a wealth of additional career related information on its website including listings of various groups at Columbia and beyond that postdocs might consider joining, opportunities for building experience to be competitive for a specific career path of interest, and job boards for both general and targeted job searches. Information about these additional resources can be found on the [OPA website](#).

Postdoc Community and Affinity Groups

Columbia University Postdoctoral Society (CUPS)

The mission of the Columbia University Postdoc Society (CUPS) is to facilitate a constructive and positive experience for postdocs that will benefit postdoctoral professionals and Columbia University. CUPS is a society run by postdocs for postdocs. CUPS represents all postdocs in the Columbia community and welcomes any postdoc to join their activities. CUPS activities include social events, such as happy hours, networking events, career and professional development events, and advocacy efforts. Visit [the CUPS website](#) or more information.

CUPS holds meetings the third Tuesday of every month on either the Morningside and CUIMC campuses or via Zoom.

To join CUPS, please send an email request to joincups@columbia.edu.

URPostdocs

Established in 2016, Columbia URPostdocs seeks to unite underrepresented (UR) postdocs and individuals who support the cause and inclusion. The mission of the group is to form a cohesive network that works together to highlight URPostdocs' distinct contributions, promotes awareness of issues that are important to all URPostdocs, and encourages participation and recruitment of new members. The group is committed to advocate for and find means to improve recruitment, retention, and mentoring of URPostdocs to aid in the development of successful careers both in academic and non-academic settings. In addition to its commitment to educating within the Columbia community, URPostdocs seeks to educate the public through outreach activities. An important goal of the URPostdocs group is to provide a platform for participating members to develop a variety of skills crucial in any career such as leadership, networking, and communication, among others.

URPostdocs hosts regular meetings (~once every two months) and organizes and co-sponsors events. Postdocs interested in joining URPostdocs should email URPostdocs@columbia.edu.

PostdoQs

Established in 2016, Columbia PostdoQs is an affinity group for LGBTQIA postdocs and allies. LGBTQIA graduate students are welcome to participate in the group as well. The group's core values are support, inclusion, education, equality, networking, and creating safe spaces. The group is committed to these core values and to promoting these values at Columbia University. The group hosts regular meetings (about once every two months) and organizes and co-sponsors events. Postdocs interested in joining PostdoQs should email PostdoQs@columbia.edu.

Postdoc Parents and Expectant Parents Group

This group supports all Postdoc Parents and Expectant Parents in the Columbia University Postdoc community. In addition to an active Facebook group to share resources and advertise events, the group hosts regular lunches, community outings, and on campus family activities. Postdocs are encouraged to join the group and participate in the various activities. Please contact postdocaffairs@columbia.edu for more information.

Parent Connection

Parent Connection is a Columbia University resource available through the Office of Work/Life that allows parents to discover other Columbia families who have children the same ages, might go to the same school, or live in the same neighborhood.

You can opt in and search for others who may want to share caregiving or school pick-ups, hire a caregiver together, or just make a new family friend. If you want to learn more about a particular school, Parent Connection can also help you find families who are already enrolled who may be willing to share their experience.

Columbia University Family Support Network (CUFSN)

The Columbia University Family Support Network (CUFSN) is a student-led, university-wide organization focused on advocating for improved resources and policies to support members of the Columbia community (students, research officers, alumni, faculty and staff) with families. By voicing the issues faced by the Columbia community, advocating for university-wide support and policies to improve resources, and connecting Columbia families with one another, CUFSN works to promote a diverse and inclusive environment of benefit to all members of the University.

Postdocs interested in CUFSN should view their website [here](#).

Women in Science at Columbia (WISC)

Women in Science at Columbia (WISC) provides outreach, support, advancement, community, and more,

for women, underrepresented minorities, and their supporters in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematical (STEM) graduate fields at Columbia. WISC is one organization made up of two chapters—one at the Morningside (116th) campus and one at the CUIMC (168th) campus. The purpose of having two chapters that share a mission and have many similar events is to make it convenient for members to attend events on the campus closer to school or home. All members are welcome and encouraged to attend events on either or both campuses.

Postdocs interested in WISC should view their website [here](#).

Social Science and Humanities Postdocs

OPA recognizes that it can be especially challenging for postdocs in the social sciences and humanities to connect with other postdocs in their fields at Columbia. With this in mind, in 2016 OPA created a Social Science and Humanities Postdocs group that has its own dedicated email listserv, feature events especially geared for these postdocs, and serve as a means for these postdocs to connect and form a community.

Social Science and Humanities postdocs interested in joining this group should email humsspostdocs@columbia.edu to join the email listserv.

Research Offices and Resources at Columbia University

There are a number of administrative offices and divisions at Columbia that offer support for research.

Executive Vice President for Research

The Office of the Executive President for Research has overall responsibility for the University's research enterprise. It is responsible for establishing and maintaining University-wide policies related to research. The Office also assists investigators seeking research funding, encourages interdisciplinary research, provides seed money for early-stage investigations, and generally helps provide the intellectual and physical environment to maintain high quality research and maximize productivity.

Website: www.evpr.columbia.edu

Clinical Trials Office (CTO)

The mission of the Clinical Trials Office is to facilitate and enhance the timely execution of quality clinical research at the Medical Center by providing support services to investigators in connection with federal and foundation grants, industry-supported clinical trials and internally developed investigator-initiated trials. The CTO supports the effective, efficient, and reliable evaluation of new pharmaceuticals and medical devices in collaboration with sponsored organizations.

Services include: expediting study placement through trial feasibility analysis; facilitating IRB and other regulator services; comprehensive study budget preparation and contract negotiation; assistance with recruitment efforts; and providing training initiatives to ensure expert study coordination.

The CTO offers training and education designed to keep investigators and their research staffs abreast of current trends in the conduct of clinical trials with the goal of providing the relevant knowledge and skills

that individuals need to conduct compliant and efficient clinical trials.

The CTO website contains an on-line submission tool, a portal for viewing the progress of pre-award negotiations and post award receipts, and other useful links.

Email: CTOInformation@columbia.edu

Website: <https://research.columbia.edu/clinical-trials-office>

Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S)

Environmental Health & Safety provides a broad range of services to promote the health and safety of all University personnel. Through cooperative relationships, EH&S actively engages the University community to ensure a safe work environment and compliance with University policies and applicable regulations. Personnel conducting laboratory research using potentially infectious materials, hazardous chemicals, recombinant DNA, and/or radioactive materials must attend the relevant EH&S sponsored safety training(s). Columbia's Institutional Biosafety Committee must approve the use of recombinant DNA, and Columbia's Radiation Safety Committee must approve the use of radioactive materials. The EH&S website contains laboratory safety information as well as safety training schedules. Refresher safety training is also available through RASCAL.

Morningside, Manhattanville, and Medical Center Campuses: 212.854.8749, 212.305.6780 & 212.305.0303 (radiation safety)

Website: www.ehs.columbia.edu

Institute of Comparative Medicine (ICM)

If you plan to conduct research with animals, your animals must be ordered through, and managed and cared for by the Institute of Comparative Medicine. The mission of the ICM is to ensure that humane care of animals is used in approved research and to support medical research teams working to develop treatments for life-threatening conditions. The ICM has certified veterinary specialists who direct the care and manage the health and welfare of research animals at Columbia. The ICM conducts a training program for veterinary specialists, as well as training courses in animal care and handling for research personnel.

Phone: 212.305.3837

Email: ContactICM@cumc.columbia.edu

Website: <https://research.columbia.edu/content/institute-comparative-medicine>

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)

If you plan to conduct animal-based research, your protocol must be approved by the University's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee for your campus. Composed of scientists, non-scientists, veterinarians and community representatives, IACUC reviews all animal research proposals to ensure humane care and use of animals in all activities related to research, and to ensure compliance with all federal and state regulations. IACUC also determines what training researchers must undergo before research involving animals can begin.

There are separate committees for the Morningside and Medical Center campuses, with one central administrative office. Animal protocols are prepared and administered online. *All personnel listed on a protocol must complete an occupational health status review, species-specific training and certification course on compliance with regulations and the basic principles underlying the humane care and use of laboratory animals.*

Phone: 212.305.2404

Email: iacuc@columbia.edu

Website: <https://research.columbia.edu/institutional-animal-care-and-use-committee>

Institutional Review Boards (IRBs)

If you plan to conduct research that involves human subjects, including behavioral research (e.g. surveys) and/or biomedical investigations, one of Columbia's four Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) will help ensure that your study complies with all applicable ethical and regulatory requirements. The University's IRBs are responsible for protecting human subjects in research and are made up of faculty and community members. The IRBs are administered centrally, with offices on the Morningside and Medical Center campuses. *All human subjects' research conducted by Columbia faculty, staff and students must be approved by a Columbia IRB.*

The IRBs offer a number of education and training opportunities, including: IRB 101, a comprehensive introductory course that provides background on the regulations that govern human subjects research and offers tips on drafting consent forms and other IRB requirements; Monthly Investigator Meetings, at which research issues are discussed; annual educational conferences; and web-based training.

Morningside Phone: 212.851.7040

Medical Center Phone: 212.305.5883

Email: irboffice@columbia.edu

Website: <https://research.columbia.edu/human-research-protection-office-and-irbs>

Office of Research Compliance and Training (ORCT)

The Office of Research Compliance and Training helps ensure that Columbia faculty and staff are in compliance with the complex web of regulatory requirements that govern research. ORCT collaborates with other offices to foster an integrated research compliance program. ORCT administers the University's Research Conflict of Interest review process, serves as a resource for international research compliance issues, and administers Columbia's Standing Committee on the Conduct of Research, which addresses issues of research misconduct. ORCT works to integrate compliance education across the University and to develop new educational programming that promotes understanding of compliance issues throughout the research enterprise. The ORCT website contains useful information about compliance topics, provides links to resources and lists available trainings for researchers, postdocs and others involved in research.

Email: research-compliance@columbia.edu

Website: <https://research.columbia.edu/office-research-compliance-and-training>

Office of Research Initiatives and Development (ORID)

The Office of Research Initiatives works across disciplines, schools and campuses to foster interdisciplinary research collaboration and supports efforts to secure funding for such collaborations. It identifies opportunities and strategies for enhancing Columbia's research presence and its status as a prominent research institution. It also administers Columbia's internal review and nomination processes for those funding opportunities that limit the number of proposals that any one institution is permitted to submit and works to improve Columbia's success rate in securing such awards.

Email: researchinitiatives@columbia.edu

Website: <https://research.columbia.edu/initiatives>

Columbia Technology Ventures (CTV)

Columbia University's technology transfer organization, Columbia Technology Ventures, serves as a bridge between Columbia's researchers and the business community. CTV's core objective is to facilitate the transfer of inventions from academic research to outside organizations for the benefit of society on a local, national and global basis. As such, CTV's primary mission is to identify, evaluate, protect, and license or spin out Columbia's intellectual property. CTV also strives to increase private sector funding for ongoing research and development in Columbia's labs.

If you believe that you have an invention or discovery that may be patentable or of interest to industry or venture capital, please contact CTV for guidance before any public disclosure. CTV also can assist researchers on material transfer agreements that may be required to send or receive certain reagents.

Email: techventures@columbia.edu
Morningside Phone: 212.854.8444
Medical Center Phone: 212.305.5198
Website: www.techventures.columbia.edu

Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA)

Sponsored Projects Administration is the University's primary support office for sponsored research grants and contracts. SPA provides assistance in proposal review and submission, award acceptance, account setup, subcontract issuance, sponsor communications and non-financial award closeout. SPA is responsible for assuring compliance with regulators and other requirements that govern the grant application process and for assisting with the non-financial requirements that govern awards. Each department is served by a dedicated project officer for the pre-award process and a financial analyst for account setups and other post-award matters.

The SPA website contains a directory of these officers, information about InfoEd (the grants management IT system) and other helpful topics.

Morningside Phone: 212.854.6851
Medical Center Phone: 212.305.4191
Website: www.spa.columbia.edu

Many of the University's sponsored projects policies and procedures have been compiled in the Sponsored Projects Handbook, a searchable, web-based resource. Researchers are encouraged to review this resource [here](#) (UNI and password needed to access).

Sponsored Projects Finance (SPF)

Sponsored Projects Finance is responsible for the financial administration and reporting of all sponsored research awards and for ensuring compliance with the regulatory and other requirements that govern the financial management of those awards.

Email: Askrf@columbia.edu
Website: <http://finance.columbia.edu/content/sponsored-projects-finance>

Training Finder and RASCAL (Research Related Trainings)

Postdocs at Columbia are required to undergo in person or online trainings to be in compliance with University, government, and funder regulations, particularly if they will be conducting research involving radiation, lasers, chemicals, animals, humans or human samples. Postdocs can identify which research related trainings they may be obligated to undergo by filling out the form in [Training Finder](#) (UNI and password are needed to access this) and completing the trainings in person or through [RASCAL](#) as indicated.

Finding Funding

Columbia University has a number of resources available to assist postdocs in identifying funding for research, training, and publishing.

[PIVOT](#) allows instantaneous access to the funding opportunities that are right for you. PIVOT includes editorially curated up-to-date funding opportunities that span all disciplines and project types, from health and medicine to humanities, law, and education, worth an estimated \$49 billion. PIVOT also offers a proprietary algorithm that compiles researcher profiles and matches them to current funding opportunities.

Start using PIVOT by clicking [here](#) and signing up for an account using your Columbia University email address. You can also view a recorded workshop on finding funding using Pivot [here](#).

The Office of Research Initiatives identifies limited submission funding opportunities for the Columbia Research community, and a number of these opportunities are open to Columbia postdocs. Limited submission opportunities can be viewed [here](#).

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs maintains an extensive list of [funding opportunities](#) on its website along with an overview of funding agencies that may be of interest to postdocs.

Visit the [Finding Funding](#) section of Columbia's Research page for more information on available funding opportunities.

The Office of Sponsored Projects Administration (SPA) is the grants office at the University and will be the point of contact for researchers planning on submitting grant or fellowship applications. It should be noted that most fellowship applications require a review by SPA prior to submission. SPA requires **several business** days to complete this review, so postdocs should consult with the department's SPA representative several weeks prior to submitting a fellowship application to ensure they are able to adhere to both internal and external application deadlines.

University Policies

The following is a partial list of policies set by Columbia University that are applicable to postdocs. When relevant, contact information follows the policy. Please contact the appropriate office directly for clarification or questions. In general, policies pertaining to postdocs may be found in the [Faculty](#)

[handbook](#).

Rules of University Conduct

The University has adopted a special set of Rules of University Conduct to govern demonstrations, rallies, picketing and the circulation of petitions. These Rules, which have been incorporated into the University Statutes, protect the rights of free expression on campus while ensuring that the University continues to function properly and that all members of the Columbia community can freely use its facilities and programs. The Rules apply to all personnel at the University.

All University faculty, employees and students are responsible for compliance with the Rules of University Conduct. The Rules are available in *Essential Policies for the Columbia Community* and online [here](#). Copies may be obtained from the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Administration who serves as the Rules Administrator.

Office of the Provost
205 Low Memorial Library, Mail Code 4313
535 W. 116th St
New York, NY 10027
Phone: 212.854.2403
Email: provost@columbia.edu

Discrimination and Harassment

Columbia University is committed to providing a learning, living, and working environment free from discrimination and harassment and to fostering a nurturing and vibrant community founded upon the fundamental dignity and worth of all of its members. The University does not tolerate any form of unlawful discrimination or harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or sexual exploitation and all such conduct is prohibited. The University strongly encourages those who have experienced, witnessed or become aware of conduct that violates University policy to come forward so that the University can take appropriate steps to prevent such conduct from occurring in the future and to ameliorate its effects. The University will protect the privacy of those who come forward to the extent possible and permissible by law.

As an equal opportunity and affirmative action employer, the University does not discriminate against or permit harassment of employees or applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, sex, gender, pregnancy, religion, creed, national origin, age, alienage and citizenship, status as a perceived or actual victim of domestic violence, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, military status, partnership status, genetic predisposition or carrier status, arrest record, or any other legally protected status. In the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, athletic and other University-administered programs, it does not discriminate against any person or permit the harassment of any individual or applicant on the basis of race, color, sex, gender, pregnancy, religion, creed, marital status, partnership status, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, military status, or any other legally protected status. All members of the University community are expected to adhere to the applicable policies and to cooperate with the procedures for responding to complaints of discrimination.

The University's policy regarding discrimination and harassment can be viewed [here](#).

The University encourages those who believe that they have experienced discrimination, harassment or other prohibited conduct to bring their concerns to the University's attention immediately. Those who have been subjected to prohibited conduct by a University employee or a third-party should notify the University's Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EOAA) Office – see below for contact and complaint filing instructions. Those who have been subjected to gender-based misconduct by a Columbia University, Barnard College or Teachers College student should notify the [University Gender Based Misconduct Office](#). The University takes allegations of prohibited conduct very seriously, and will actively investigate all alleged discrimination and/or harassment, even in the absence of a complaint, and will take remedial action where appropriate. Complaints may be submitted in writing or made orally. Complaints may be submitted to EOAA by any of the following methods:

- By phone at (212) 854-5511
- By e-mail at eoaa@columbia.edu
- Via online report: https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?ColumbiaUniv&layout_id=5
- By mail at 103 Low Library, MC 4333, 535 West 116th Street New York, NY 10027, or
- By hand delivery to 103 Low Library.

Complaints can also be submitted to the University's Compliance Hotline: (866) 627-3768.

Postdocs may also wish to seek confidential counsel and advice from the University's [Ombuds Office](#).

Patents and Inventions

Assignment of Rights

As part of its procedures for implementing its intellectual property policy and to comply with federal laws, the University requires certain categories of faculty and officers of research, including full-time postdocs, to sign an Assignment Agreement that provides that they will assign to the University their rights to any patentable invention or discovery conceived of or reduced to practice in the course of conducting research at the University. Information on the purpose of the agreement and who must complete it may be obtained from [Columbia Technology Ventures \(CTV\)](#).

You can also contact the Assistant Provost for Academic Appointments in the Office of the Provost for Morningside appointments or the Office of Faculty Affairs in the Office of the Executive Vice President for Health and Biomedical Sciences for Medical Center appointments. For a copy of the Assignment Agreement form, please click [here](#).

Protecting Intellectual Property

Postdocs are responsible for reporting any discoveries or inventions that may have commercial value and any work that seems likely to produce such discoveries or inventions to CTV as early as possible. In addition, postdocs should be aware that dissemination of information about an innovation outside of the University could jeopardize or limit its patentability.

If you believe that you have an invention or discovery that is or may be patentable, contact CTV for guidance on the appropriate forms and to learn more about technology transfer at Columbia. CTV serves as a bridge between Columbia's researchers and the business community, in order to transfer inventions

from academic research to outside organizations for the benefit of society on a local, national and global basis.

Columbia University is considered to have one of the most experienced and successful technology transfer offices in the world, with more than 300 invention disclosures from faculty, 70 license deals, 100 industry sponsored research agreements, and 12 new start-ups each year. CTV can also assist researchers on material transfer agreements or confidentiality agreements as needed.

[Columbia Technology Ventures \(CTV\)](#)

Morningside Office

80 Claremont Ave., 4th Floor
New York, NY 10027
Ph: 212.854.8444

Medical Center Office

51 Audubon Ave., 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10032
212.305.5198

Misconduct in Research

Columbia University is committed to assuring the integrity of research conducted under its auspices and has put in place policies and procedures that define misconduct, outline the process for making and investigating allegations, and explain the consequences of committing misconduct. The University's Institutional Policy on Misconduct in Research may be found [here](#).

The University defines research misconduct as any fabrication, falsification or plagiarism in proposing, performing or reviewing research or in the reporting of research results. Fabrication means the making up of data or results and the recording or reporting thereof. Falsification means the manipulation of research materials, equipment or processes, or the change or omission of data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record. Plagiarism means the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results or words without giving appropriate credit.

Research misconduct does not include honest error; differences of opinion; authorship disputes that do not involve plagiarism, such as who to list as first author on a publication; or violations of other University policies, such as the sexual harassment policy.

Additional Compensation for Professional Development Activities

Columbia University recognizes that Postdoctoral Research Scientists, Scholars and Fellows ("Postdocs") play a unique role at the University as their activities encompass both research and professional training.

This dual role has been recognized in national reports and in federal regulations.²³⁴ In order to facilitate career development experiences for Postdocs in compliance with applicable federal regulations, the University has established guidelines and an approval form for Postdoc incidental career development activities which may found [here](#).

Postdocs interested in engaging in career development activities which merit additional compensation (e.g. teaching), must follow these guidelines and be granted approval using the aforementioned approval form prior to the start of the activity in question. Not all activities will be approved, particularly those that do not conform to the policies outlined in the guidance document and those that may significantly detract from the Postdoc's research and scholarly efforts from which they are deriving their primary salary or stipend.

Use of the University's Name

Columbia's name and reputation are assets of both academic and economic value. The University, therefore, has a compelling interest in ensuring that its name, insignias, such as the Columbia Crown and Columbia Shield, and the emblems of individual schools are used in a manner that furthers its mission and is consistent with its institutional interests. No officer should use the official title of the University, or any of its parts, except in connection with legitimate University purposes. The name of the University, its insignias, and the emblems of its schools may not be used to advertise or recommend commercial products and services, to promote the activities of outside organizations, or to further social or political causes. Exceptions require the prior approval of the Provost. These policies also apply to the use of the University name and insignias in any electronic media, including Internet addresses, websites, and domain names. In connection with their outside activities, faculty, and other officers may identify themselves as holding appointments at Columbia by listing their University titles. They should, however, be careful not to imply that the University supports, sponsors, or endorses those activities.

Smoking, Alcohol, and Drug Use

Smoking

In recognition of the health risks associated with smoking, and in compliance with the New York City law, the University has adopted a policy that restricts the right to smoke on its premises. Smoking is not permitted in any outdoor area, outdoor eating area, and any other area with signs prohibiting smoking. This policy applies to all enclosed work areas, including private offices. There are limited exceptions to these restrictions in certain areas that are enumerated in the [University's Smoking Policy](#).

² 2 CFR § 200.400(f)

³ National Institutes of Health (2012) *Biomedical Research Workforce Working Group Report*, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD, USA

⁴ National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, Institute of Medicine (2014) *The Postdoctoral Experience Revisited*, National Academies Press

Drugs and Alcohol

It is a violation of University policy to unlawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess, or use a controlled substance in a University workplace. Postdocs may not report to work, or remain at work, while under the influence of a controlled substance or alcohol.

Any postdoc who has been convicted of an offense under any criminal drug statute must notify the Vice President for Human Resources in writing within five days of the conviction. Within 30 days of notification, the University will determine if disciplinary action is warranted. Such action may include termination or the requirement that the individual participate in a drug assistance or rehabilitation program.

Compliance

Environmental Health & Safety

Various hazardous chemicals and biological agents are routinely used in laboratories, research facilities, and hospitals. Environmental Health & Safety is the University's resource for expert guidance and support to recognize, evaluate and control these hazards.

The University maintains a comprehensive health and safety program to protect the health of students, faculty and staff as well as the environment. Goals of the health and safety program include:

- Minimizing risk of exposure to hazardous biological, chemical, physical or radiological agents;
- Minimizing risk of work-related injury and illness;
- Attaining these goals with minimum burden on education, research and patient care activities.

All laboratory personnel are required to participate in training programs as mandated by applicable federal, state and local regulations, as well as University policy.

Education and safety training sessions for laboratory personnel include:

- Welcome and orientation: required for all new personnel within 30 days of start of employment.
- Laboratory Safety and Chemical Hygiene training provides an introduction and overview of basic laboratory safety, a summary of the OSHA Laboratory Standard and the University's policies regarding laboratory safety and chemical hygiene, including the management of hazardous chemical waste: required for all new personnel within 30 days of start of employment.
- Bloodborne Pathogen Protection training: required for all personnel working with biological and/or bloodborne pathogens within 30 days of start of employment and on an annual basis. Refresher training is available online via RASCAL.
- Formaldehyde and Xylene training: required for all personnel working with formaldehyde and/or xylene within 30 days of start of employment and on an annual basis. Refresher training is available online via RASCAL.
- Radiation Safety training: required for all personnel using radioactive materials in their research prior to start of use of radiation. Please note the following additional administrative requirements:
 - Contact the Radiation Safety Officer to obtain an "Authorization Form" to use radioactive materials (RAM);
 - Before the new employee or user starts actual work, the laboratory must be posted for RAM and a radiation film badge (if required) issued to the new employee or user.

The OSHA bloodborne pathogen exposure control plan requires that a medical surveillance program is provided for all postdocs who perform the following tasks or procedures, and may therefore may have potential exposure to bloodborne pathogens:

- Work with the following materials:
 - Human or non-human primate blood
 - Other Potentially Infectious Materials (OPIM) - (1) The following human/ non-human primate body fluids: semen, vaginal secretions, cerebrospinal fluid, synovial fluid, pleural fluid, pericardial fluid, peritoneal fluid, amniotic fluid, saliva in dental procedures, any body fluid that is visibly contaminated with blood, and all body fluids in situations where it is difficult or impossible to differentiate between body fluids; (2) Any unfixed tissue or organ (other than intact skin) from a human (living or dead); and (3) HIV containing cell or tissue cultures, organ cultures, and HIV or HBV containing culture medium or other solutions; and blood, organs, or other tissues from experimental animals infected with HIV or HBV.
 - Human or non-human primate cell lines (regardless of being declared "pathogen-free"). Includes work with viral vectors in human/non-human primate cell lines or introduction of human cells or cell lines into experimental mammals.
 - Infectious agents that can cause disease in healthy human subjects
- Work with non-human primates
- Participation in human research studies that may entail blood/body fluid exposure.

The medical surveillance program is provided through the CUIMC Office of Workforce Health and Safety in the Harkness Pavilion, 1st Floor, 180 Fort Washington Ave., (212) 305-7590 and is comprised of two parts:

- 1) Prior to work involving risk of exposure, vaccination for hepatitis B virus is offered and must be formally accepted or declined by the postdoc. For non-CUIMC campuses this is done by completing a Hepatitis B Vaccine Notification Form in the Hazardous Materials menu in RASCAL. For the CUIMC campus this is done during a clinic visit.
- 2) Following any workplace exposure, a medical evaluation if offered and may include an offer of post-exposure prophylactic drugs for potential HIV infection.

Environmental Health & Safety

Morningside Campus, Manhattanville, Nevis and Lamont: 212.854.8749

Medical Center Campus: 212.305.6780

Website: www.ehs.columbia.edu

Human Subjects

Postdocs may not conduct research with human subjects without the prior approval of the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Additionally, individuals conducting research with human subjects are required to undertake mandatory educational on-line training (via RASCAL) and to prove competency before IRB approval will be granted. Moreover, no one may work with patient records or protected health information without completing the University's HIPAA training. Anyone at the Medical Center who is present in patient care settings is subject to the University's Medical Surveillance Policies and Procedures for the applicable campus and if such patients are at New York Presbyterian Hospital (NYPH), the NYPH Medical Surveillance Policies and Procedures.

Institutional Review Board

Website: <https://research.columbia.edu/human-research-protection-office-and-irbs>

Morningside Campus phone: 212.851.7040

Medical Center Campus phone: 212.305.5883

Research Involving Animal Subjects

Research involving animal subjects is required to be reviewed and approved by the Columbia University Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) prior to initiation. IACUC is a federally mandated Committee responsible for the oversight and evaluation of the institution's animal program, procedures, and facilities to ensure that they are consistent with the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, the Animal Welfare Regulations and the Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals.

The written animal protocol describes the research activities and all personnel performing those activities. Research personnel are required to be enrolled in the University's medical surveillance program and to complete online species-specific training. All personnel who will work with rodents must receive wet lab training before they can perform experiments on rodents.

IACUC acknowledges the extensive medical advancements that are the direct result of animal research. The Committee fully accepts its responsibilities to ensure the humane care and use of animals in all activities related to research testing and education. Research is conducted in accordance with all applicable laws, regulations, guidelines and policies governing the use of animals in research.

For detailed information on Columbia University policies pertaining to animal research, refer to the IACUC website.

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)

Phone: 212.305.2404

Website: <https://research.columbia.edu/institutional-animal-care-and-use-committee>

Institute of Comparative Medicine (ICM)

Phone: 212.305.3837

Website: www.cumc.columbia.edu/dept/icm

PI Waiver

In order to maintain academic standards and in recognition of the University's assumption of liabilities under sponsored projects, the University limits the eligibility of persons who can serve as PIs.

A PI normally must have a full-time appointment and must be an: Officer of Instruction in the rank of: Professor; Associate Professor; Assistant Professor or Instructor. They may also be an Officer of Research in the rank of: Senior Research Scientist/Scholar or Research Scientist/Scholar.

Persons with appointments carrying other instructional or research titles, including those in a visiting or adjunct grade, may act as co-PIs with officers in one of the instructional or research grades cited above.

However, individuals who do not meet the above criteria may not serve as the sole PI without the approval of their department chair, director, dean or vice president and the Provost.

The Provost has delegated the authority to make such exceptions as follows:

- For officers at CUIMC, the Executive Vice President for Health and Biomedical Sciences;
- For those holding appointments at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, the Director;
- For those holding appointments elsewhere in the University, the EVPR.

Officers seeking an exception to this policy should submit a request through Sponsored Projects Administration. Approval may be requested on a project-by-project basis or for all projects of the officer. The request must be countersigned by the appropriate chair or director and dean or vice president in order to acknowledge the financial responsibility of the department or school for the proposed project or projects. In addition, the request must include the individual's curriculum vitae and, if it relates to a specific project, an abstract of the project.

[Ombuds Office](#)

The Ombuds Office helps to promote civility, mutual respect and ethical conduct, and to identify ways to prevent disruptive conflict by alerting the administration to policy issues and recommending changes in University practices. The Ombuds Office is designed to be an accessible entry-point for individuals at all levels of the University to bring concerns about misunderstandings, incivility or possible wrongdoing; it is intended to be a safe and open place to discuss issues without fear of retaliation. The Ombuds Office fills a need for those whose complaints do not fall within the scope of any existing policies, procedures, or jurisdictions – providing a resource for people with unusual or “grey area” concerns, or whose conflicts could not be resolved by other University processes.

The Ombuds Officers are designated neutrals who are available to provide independent, confidential, neutral and informal problem solving and conflict resolution assistance to all faculty, staff and students of the University.

The Ombuds Office is a place where members of the University community can seek guidance regarding disputes or concerns at no cost and at any stage in the resolution process, as a first step or a last resort. The Ombuds Office is a resource for information about University structure, policies, procedures, and practices; it confidentially receives concerns or complaints about allegations and perceptions of interpersonal conflicts, improprieties or unfairness, or broader systemic problems. The Ombuds Officers listen, provide information and referrals, and offer a flexible range of options for resolving a problem. The Ombuds Office supplements but does not replace the existing resources for conflict resolution and fair practice at Columbia University.

Website: <http://ombuds.columbia.edu/>

Email: ombuds@columbia.edu

Morningside*

660 Schermerhorn Extension, Mail Code 5558

1200 Amsterdam Avenue

Phone: 212.854.1234

**Manhattanville and Lamont postdocs can contact Ombuds using this same telephone number*

Medical Center

154 Haven Avenue, Room 412

Phone: 212.304.7026

Grievance Procedures

Postdocs, with certain exceptions for Postdoctoral Residency Fellows, have several avenues of redress if they feel they have been treated unfairly. Postdocs who have experienced or witnessed acts of sexual harassment or discrimination should review the section on discrimination and harassment in this handbook for further reporting information. Postdocs who experience problems with their appointment, compensation, or working conditions should follow the process outlined in the Grievance and Arbitration section (Article 9) of the [Union Contract](#).

Terminations

For information on Discharge and Discipline, see Article 7 in the [Union Contract](#).

Notice of Nonrenewal

Postdoctoral appointments are not made for more than a year at a time and postdocs are not entitled to a minimum period of notice of nonrenewal. However, principal investigators are responsible for informing them in advance of a decision not to renew their appointments. The Provost may require that an appointment be extended in the absence of a compelling reason for giving less than three months' notice.

Notice of nonrenewal must be given in writing. The Provost may require a department, school, institute or center to extend a research appointment if this obligation is not met.

Resignation

A resignation is defined as a voluntary separation from employment. If a postdoc wishes to resign, he/she should discuss this with their adviser as soon as possible. In any event, a postdoc research scientist/scholar should give notice in writing to their adviser as early as possible, with the expectation that, when possible, at least three months' notice be provided before the resignation will be effective. Postdoc research fellows must comply with the terms and conditions of the awards under which they are being supported.