

Greetings and Welcome to Columbia University!

We're thrilled that you've chosen to take the next step in your career with us and join one of the world's most prolific research communities. Columbia University spans four campuses across the New York City area and is home to over 2,000 Postdocs and Associate Research Scientists who play a vital role in advancing our renowned research programs.

As the newest member of this vibrant community, we've prepared a guide to help you plan for your time here and make the most of your experience.

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

GET APPOINTED

To be appointed at Columbia, you will need to sign an employment contract. Your Department Administrator (DA) will then assist you in submitting the necessary paperwork to the appropriate office. Once your appointment is confirmed, be sure to ask your DA for your UNI (University Network ID), which will grant you access to online resources and training before you arrive on campus. Additionally, take note of your appointment's end date, as reappointment paperwork should begin processing at least 90 days before your contract expires.

GET INFORMED

Make sure to discuss expectations regarding work hours, project guidelines, departmental policies, procedures for scheduling vacation or taking sick days, payment schedules, and necessary keys to rooms/labs with your PI.

GET A PLACE TO LIVE

It is advised that you begin your housing search at least one month before moving to NYC. If you are interested in on-campus housing, there are limited opportunities available to Postdocs on the Morningside and CUIMC campuses. Click [here](#) to learn more about on-campus housing options for Postdocs on the Morningside Campus and click [here](#) for the CUIMC Campus options. Housing is not guaranteed on either campus.

Off-campus housing is also a viable option with, many postdocs living in neighborhoods throughout the five boroughs. Click [here](#) to learn more about off-campus housing options.

INTERNATIONAL POSTDOCS

You will need to contact [ISSO](#) to ensure that all appropriate forms have been completed. Also, make sure to request a letter from your DA to enable you to obtain a Social Security Number (SSN). Click [here](#) for more information about obtaining a SSN. Please also review ISSO's website for information about taxes.

ONCE YOU ARE HERE

GET ACCESS

You will need several pieces of information to gain access to Columbia buildings and resources. You should have already received your UNI from your DA. Next, you will need a Columbia ID card. If you are on the Morningside campus, after your DA has forwarded your nomination package to the Provost's Office, visit the ID Office in Kent Hall, Room 204. If you are on the medical campus, after your nomination package is sent to the Office of Faculty Affairs, take an identification letter from your DA to the Public Safety Office in the P&S Building (located at 630 W. 168th St.).

GET CONNECTED

There are many ways to connect with other Columbia Postdocs, including the [Columbia University Postdoctoral Society \(CUPS\)](#), LGBTQIA affinity group ([PostdoQs](#)), underrepresented postdoc group ([URPostdocs](#)), and Postdoc Parenting Group. Additionally, the OPA is part of the [National Postdoctoral Association \(NPA\)](#), an organization created to improve the postdoctoral experience by promoting connections and facilitating individual and organizational professional growth. If you have not done so yet, do not forget to become a member.

GET TRAINED

Complete necessary trainings through Columbia's [research compliance training finder](#). You will also receive an email about completing the mandatory Anti-Harassment, Discrimination, and Title IX training.

GET COVERED

Sign up for health insurance **within 31 days** of your appointment date. Eligibility is contingent upon your title. Learn more about Postdoc eligibility for benefits such as vacation days, flexible spending accounts, dependent care, life insurance, and retirement plans by clicking [here](#).

GET SUPPORT

Funding opportunities can be found through [PIVOT](#) and [InfoED](#). Support for research initiatives can be found through the many [research support offices](#). Other helpful resources include: [International Students and Scholars Office](#), [Office of Work/Life](#), [Ombuds Office](#), [Center for Teaching and Learning](#), [Well-being](#), [Blue Folder](#), [HR Benefits](#), [Employee Assistance Program](#), [Labor and Employee Relations](#), [Office of Institutional Equity](#), among many others!

GET MOTIVATED

[The Office for Postdoctoral Affairs and Early Career Research \(OPA\)](#) offers a multitude of programming to assist with your career goals. Check out the [Individual Development Plan \(IDP\) Program](#) and some of the many other [career development offerings](#), including individual career counseling, Career Advancement Series, Academic Application & Early Career Success Series, and more!

OPA also offers regular wellness programming to support the mental health and well-being of the Postdoctoral community. Check out the [OPA events calendar](#) to see what programming is coming up soon!

ONCE YOU ARE HERE

BANKING AND TAXES

There are many banking options in NYC. However, we suggest to choose one that has a branch around the campuses. If you are on the Morningside campus, [Bank of America](#) or [Chase Bank](#) may be options for you. If you are on the medical campus, [Chase Bank](#), [Bank of America](#), or [Citibank](#) may be options for you.

Also, you have to file your taxes every year and there are several companies that provide this service such as [H&R Block](#) or [Turbotax](#). You will receive your necessary documents from the University. Please refer to the [Finance Office](#) for more information.

TRANSPORTATION

If you are new to Manhattan, navigating public transportation efficiently can make your experience much smoother. First, take advantage of the subway—it is the fastest way to get around, especially during rush hours. Download apps like MYmta or Citymapper to track train schedules and avoid unexpected delays. For buses, use Select Bus Service (SBS) routes, which are faster due to dedicated lanes. If you prefer biking, Citi Bike is a great option, with docking stations across the city. Finally, refer to [Columbia Transportation](#) to learn about the Intercampus Shuttle.

GROCERY STORES

There are many options for grocery shopping in Manhattan. If you are near the Morningside Campus, some choices include: [C-Town Supermarket](#), [Food Town](#), [Morton Williams](#), [Westside Market](#), [H Mart](#), [Whole Foods Market](#), [Trader Joe's](#), and [Fine Fare Supermarket](#). If you are near the Medical Campus, some options include: [Super Foodtown](#), [Shop Fair](#), [C-Town Supermarket](#), and [Key Food](#).

Refer to the [Mindful Eating and Nutrition](#) website for more information.

ENTERTAINMENT

There is no shortage of entertainment options in NYC. For Broadway and off-Broadway shows, check out [TodayTix](#) for discounts. For live music and comedy, [Time Out New York](#) lists top events weekly. Museums like [The Met](#) and [MoMA](#) often have free or pay-what-you-wish days—visit their websites for details. If you love outdoor activities, [Bryant Park](#) offers free movie nights and yoga classes. Finally, [Eventbrite](#) is great for discovering unique local happenings.

DON'T FORGET!

Once you arrive on campus, please make sure to attend an upcoming OPA Orientation for specific information about the benefits and resources available to Columbia Postdocs by checking the [OPA Calendar](#). In the meantime, you can review the [Postdoctoral Handbook](#), [Faculty Handbook](#), and [essential policies](#) for the Columbia community. Also, remember to mark your calendar 3 months before your appointment ends to initiate reappointment paperwork, if appropriate.

Joining the team of researchers at Columbia University is an exciting next step in your career. Congratulations on this accomplishment. We look forward to supporting you during this phase of your career.