

Summary of Recommendations from the National Academies Report 2014¹

1. **“Postdoctoral appointments for a given postdoctoral researcher should total no more than 5 years in duration, barring extraordinary circumstances.** This maximum term should include cumulative postdoctoral research experience, though extensions may be granted in extraordinary circumstances (e.g. family leave, illness).”

2. **“The title of “postdoctoral researcher” should be applied only to those people who are receiving advanced training in research.** When the appointment period is completed, the postdoctoral researchers should move on to a permanent position externally or be transitioned internally to a staff position with a different and appropriate designation and salary.”

3. **“Host institutions and mentors should, beginning at the first year of graduate school, make graduate students aware of the wide variety of career paths available for Ph.D. recipients, and explain that postdoctoral positions are intended only for those seeking advanced research training.** Career guidance should include, where feasible, the provision of internships and other practical experiences. **The postdoctoral position should not be viewed by graduate students or principal investigators as the default step after the completion of doctoral training.**”

4. **“The NIH should raise the NRSA postdoctoral starting salary to \$50,000 (2014 dollars), and adjust it annually for inflation. Postdoctoral salaries should be appropriately higher where regional cost of living, disciplinary norms, and institutional or sector salary scales dictate higher salaries.**

“In addition, host institutions should provide benefits to postdoctoral researchers that are appropriate to their level of experience and commensurate with benefits given to equivalent full-time employees. Comprehensive benefits should include health insurance, family and parental leave, and access to a retirement plan.”

“Current postdoctoral salaries are low...The committee considered five different approaches for determining an appropriate minimum salary:
 - (1) indexing to contemporary college graduates,
 - (2) indexing to graduate stipends,
 - (3) indexing to newly hired assistant professors,
 - (4) inflation of previous recommendations, and
 - (5) Research Grade Evaluation Guide.
“**All of these approaches...suggest an amount of \$50,000 or more....** the starting salary prescribed by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) postdoctoral award (currently set at \$42,000 for 2014) has become the *de facto* standard for many disciplines and on many academic campuses.”

5. **“Mentoring is an essential component of the postdoctoral experience and entails more than simply supervision. Mentoring should not be solely a responsibility of the principal investigator, although he or she should be actively engaged in mentoring. Host institutions should create provisions that encourage postdoctoral researchers to seek advice, either formally or informally, from multiple advisors, in addition to their immediate supervisor. Host institutions and funding agencies should take responsibility for ensuring the quality of mentoring through evaluation of, and training programs for, the mentors.”**

6. **“Every institution that employs postdoctoral researchers should collect data on the number of currently employed postdoctoral researchers and where they go after completion of their research training, and should make this information publicly available.”**

¹ The Postdoctoral Experience Revisited. 2014. National Academy of Sciences; National Academy of Engineering; Institute of Medicine. ISBN: 978-0-309-31446-6. Summary, pages 4-7.