

Policy Title: Postdoctoral Compensation Policy	
Responsible Office: Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, Office of VP Research	
Effective Date of Current Version: July 1, 2024	Revised: n/a
Originally Issued: July 1, 2024	Author: J. Chao

Who Should Read This Policy

All faculty and staff involved in managing and hiring postdoctoral research associates, scholars, fellows and trainees. This includes Primary Investigators, Deans, Chairs, Business Managers, Dean’s office administrative staff, and the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. Postdocs should also review this policy.

Policy Statement

Effective July 1, 2024, Lehigh University will implement phased increases in minimum postdoctoral salaries to align with the National Institute for Health Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NIH NRSA) guidelines, with annual adjustments thereafter. This policy applies to all postdoctoral research associates, scholars, fellows, and trainees, ensuring equitable compensation across the university. All faculty members must adhere to the new salary guidelines and incorporate them into future budget planning.

Reason for Policy and Underlying Principles

Lehigh University commits to fostering a supportive and competitive research environment that attracts and retains top talent. This policy aligns postdoctoral salary minima with NIH NRSA guidelines to ensure fair and equitable compensation, address disparities, and enhance compliance with national standards. Implementing these salary increases upholds the university’s dedication to excellence in research and innovation, supporting the professional growth and financial well-being of the postdoctoral community. This policy establishes clear salary benchmarks and funding responsibilities, ensuring transparency and consistency across all postdoctoral appointments.

Definitions

Term	Definition
NIH NRSA	National Institutes of Health National Research Service Award
ORSP	Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
PI	Principal Investigator, responsible for the research project and managing postdocs.
Postdoc	All trainees employed by Lehigh, regardless of college, discipline or effort level. This category includes titles such as Postdoctoral Research

	Scholar/Associate/Fellow/Trainee. It does not include pre-doctoral trainees, research scientists, or visiting assistant professors.
PDO	Postdoctoral Affairs Office
VPR	Vice Provost for Research

Procedures

Who this applies to:

This minimum applies to all postdocs regardless of college, discipline or effort level. See Lehigh definition of Post-Doctoral Research Associate. This category includes titles such as Postdoctoral Research Scholar/Associate/Fellow/Trainee. It does not include pre-doctoral trainees, research scientists, or visiting assistant professors. Postdoc appointments with less than 1.0 FTE will be pro-rated according to the new guidelines. If the PI cannot meet the salary requirements, the Postdoctoral position title cannot be used.

1. Budget Planning for Grant Proposals

Responsible Party: PI, Grant Specialists, ORSP

- When drafting grant proposals, PIs must use the current NIH NRSA stipend rates and incorporate a standard 3% annual increase for postdoctoral salaries.
- All new proposals submitted after May 31, 2024, must reflect these updated salary rates.
- PIs must coordinate with college Grant Specialists and ORSP for accurate budget planning and compliance with this policy.

2. Salary Adjustment for Current Postdocs

Responsible Parties: VPR, Deans, PIs, Administrative Directors, PDO

- Effective July 1, 2024, current postdocs' salaries will be adjusted to meet the FY2024 NIH NRSA minimums.
 - For postdocs funded by internal sources, the VPR and the respective PI/College will share the salary difference 50/50 for up to one year.
 - For postdocs funded by existing grants, the VPR and the PI/College will share the salary difference 50/50 for the duration of the grant.
- PDO and Administrative Directors will meet quarterly to confirm that current postdocs receive their annual salary increase on the reappointment date, aligned with their years of experience at Lehigh.

3. Implementation for New/Future Postdocs

Responsible Parties: PIs, Deans, ORSP

- For new postdocs hired on or after July 1, 2024, salaries must meet the current NIH minimums or greater.

- If funded by internal sources, the PI is responsible for meeting the minimum salary requirement.
- If funded by external grants, the PI must budget the new minimum from the start.
- PIs must propose an appropriate stipend rate based on relevant research experience as outlined by the NIH:

“Relevant experience may include research experience (including industrial), teaching assistantship, internship, residency, clinical duties, or other time spent in a health-related field beyond that of the qualifying doctoral degree. Once the appropriate stipend level has been determined, the trainee or fellow must be paid at that level for the entire grant year. The stipend for each additional year of Kirschstein-NRSA support is the next level in the stipend structure and does not change mid-year.”
- The stipend rate and experience level will be reviewed by the Dean’s Office based on specific guidelines (e.g., Stanford’s)
- **Encouraged Stipend Increases:** PIs may offer stipend levels above the NIH NRSA minimum salary requirements based on years of experience and are encouraged to do so when possible. It is the PI’s responsibility to cover the difference.
- PDO and Administrative Directors will meet quarterly to confirm that new postdocs are compensated appropriately and receive their annual salary increase on the reappointment date, aligned with their years of experience.

4. Annual Increases for Postdoc Salaries:

- Postdocs will receive an annual increase on the reappointment date, which marks the additional year of experience. Increases will be no less than 1-3% (aligned with NIH stipend levels and standard grant-budgeted increases) but can be higher at the PI’s discretion.
- Where agency guidelines exceed the Lehigh annual raise level, PIs must use the rates provided by the agency.
- PIs must follow any postdoctoral stipend guidelines provided by their sponsors if they exceed the NIH minimum stipend levels.

NIH NRSA Table: FY24 vs. FY25 Rates

Career Level	Yrs Exp	Stipend for FY 2023-2024	Stipend for FY 2024-2025
Postdoctoral	0	\$56,484	\$61,008
Postdoctoral	1	\$56,880	\$61,428
Postdoctoral	2	\$57,300	\$61,884
Postdoctoral	3	\$59,592	\$64,356
Postdoctoral	4	\$61,572	\$66,492
Postdoctoral	5	\$63,852	\$68,964

Special Situations/Exceptions

Responsible Parties: PIs, Deans, PDO

- Requests for exceptions to this policy must be submitted in writing to the respective College Dean, detailing the specific circumstances and justification for the exception.
- The College Dean will review the request and may consult with the PDO as needed. Decisions on exceptions will be communicated in writing to the requesting party.
- **Limits on Salary Increase:** Salaries should not exceed 25% above the most current NIH salary rate without further discussion with the Dean's office. or extraordinary postdoctoral achievements, may warrant consideration for exceptions. These will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if they align with the university's commitment to fair and equitable compensation.

Responsibilities

Responsible Party	List of Responsibilities
Administrative Director	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with Dean, Chair, and PI to determine the source of the 50% college cost-share for all currently funded postdocs, both internal and external. 2. Meet quarterly with PDO to confirm that current and new postdocs are being compensated in accordance with postdoc compensation policy.
Chair	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with Dean, PI and Administrative Director to determine the source of the 50% college cost-share for all currently funded postdocs, both internal and external.
Dean	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with Administrative Director, PI and Chair to determine and provide the source of the 50% college cost-share for all currently funded postdocs, both internal and external. 2. Review special exception requests and communicate decisions in writing to the requesting party.
Grant Specialist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assist PIs with budget planning to verify that all new proposals submitted after May 31, 2024, reflect current postdoc compensation policy.
ORSP	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Verify and confirm with PI that all new grant proposals submitted after May 31, 2024, reflect current postdoc compensation policy. 2. Assist PI, Administrative Director and Dean to determine whether current postdoc salary increases can be budgeted to existing grant.
PI	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with Dean, Chair and Administrative Director to determine the source of the 50% college cost-share for all currently funded postdocs, both internal and external.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Communicate with Grant Specialist and ORSP to budget accurately and in compliance with postdoc compensation policy on all new proposals submitted after May 23, 2024. 3. Communicate with the Dean's Office to verify the appropriate stipend level based on the new guidelines for calculating years of relevant experience for postdocs hired on or after July 1, 2024. 4. Review postdoc(s) salary annually on reappointment date to verify that annual increases are provided. 5. Submit requests for exceptions to the policy in writing to the respective College Dean, detailing the specific circumstances and justification for the exception.
PDO	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet quarterly with Administrative Directors to confirm that current and new postdocs are being compensated in accordance with postdoc compensation policy. 2. Meet quarterly with Administrative Directors to confirm that new postdocs are compensated appropriately. 3. Provide consultation to PIs and Colleges on compensation policy as needed. 4. Assess compliance and update policy annually.
VPR	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide cost-share of 50% of salary difference for up to one year for current, internally funded postdocs. 2. Provide cost share of 50% of salary difference for the duration of the grant for externally funded postdocs.

Contacts

Direct questions about this policy to the Postdoctoral Affairs Office at vpresearch@lehigh.edu.