Postdoctoral Affairs: Lunch and Learn
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Learning outcomes

- Educate you about what a postdoc is (and is not)
- Provide information to you about resources available to postdocs and the role of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs
- Highlight the importance of postdocs to Waterloo
What is a postdoc

- Contract employee at the University of Waterloo
  - Not a staff member (not part of UWSA)
  - Not a faculty member (not part of FAUW)
  - Not a student (pay no fees; postdoc does not lead to degree/certificate)
- Completed PhD within last 5 years
- Engages primarily in research, but may also teach, help run the lab, etc.
- Supervised by a faculty member
- Paid
- Special immigration status
What is a NOT postdoc?

- Research Associate
- Visiting Scholar
- Visiting faculty member
- Visiting professor
- International Visiting Graduate Student (IVGS)
- Exchange student
- Exchange faculty member
- Exchange staff member
- Others?
Postdocs @ Waterloo: headcount

- At April 1 2015: 284
- At April 1 2016: 319
- At April 1 2017: 371
- At April 1 2018: 385
Postdocs @ Waterloo: gender and age

Average age: 32
Gender: 63% male

- Male Employees: 272
- Female Employees: 113
Postdocs @ Waterloo: domestic/international

55% international

International: 210 | Domestic: 175
Postdocs @ Waterloo: by Faculty/Group

- Faculty of Engineering: 176
- Faculty of Science: 62
- Faculty of Mathematics: 74
- Faculty of Environment: 13
- Faculty of Arts: 16
- Inst. for Quantum Computing: 21
- Faculty of Applied Health Sciences: 23
## How does a postdoc get hired?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisor Grant</th>
<th>Fellowship/Award</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor advertises/interviews/selects candidate. Faculty Dean’s office approves the hiring.</td>
<td>Postdoc is awarded fellowship/award and seeks out a potential supervisor at University of Waterloo. Faculty Dean’s office approves the hiring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postdoc paid from supervisor grant (including benefit costs), via University payroll.</td>
<td>Postdoc can be paid directly from the granting agency or via University payroll, depending on the agency/award. All should register with HR, regardless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International postdocs must have a work permit</td>
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<td>Only once contract is processed by HR will postdoc have email, library access, Watcard, etc.</td>
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Appointment of a postdoc

- The maximum initial term of appointment is three years.

- The appointment shall expire, without any further payment obligations by the University, on the date specified in the letter of appointment.

- Appointment - approval of the Chair or Director of the department/school and the Faculty Dean.

- Appointment letter

- Non-faculty employment form (doc)
Postdoctoral affairs @ Waterloo today

- Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (GSPA)
  - May 1, 2017
  - Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs
  - Assistant Director, Graduate Communications and Postdoctoral Affairs

- uwaterloo.ca/postdoctoral-affairs
What GSPA does (and does not) do

- Advise faculty members/support staff on postdoc regulations, best/fair practices re: hiring and employment types, etc.
  - Don’t actually process contracts, approve or sign the paperwork
- Consult with prospective postdocs on appointment process, fair practices, procedure
  - Don’t actually process applications or formally “approve” hiring
- Continually update online information tailored to postdocs (uwaterloo.ca/postdoctoral-affairs), including common funding sources
  - Not actually involved in the application process for any fellowships, besides the Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship (Heidi Mussar)
What GSPA does (and does not) do

- Postdoc experience: institution-wide postdoc events, professional development resources, onboarding via the website, and services fairs
  - Don’t provide advice related to immigration/work permits (Frances Hannigan, Legal and Immigration Services)
- Manage a postdoc listserv, and maintain a monthly-updated list of postdocs
  - Don’t track Research Associates, visiting professors, etc.
- University-wide awareness/advocacy
Common myths about postdocs
Most common myths: Postdocs don’t get benefits

- Postdocs are contract employees and get the same benefits (including health, dental, pension) as any other contract employee.

- Benefit entitlements are based on contract length (e.g. 2 years+ is pension & dental, just as it is for other employees).

- Main difference is special benefits package for tri-agency funded postdocs (benefits provided centrally for fellowships of equal or greater prestige) – makes UWaterloo more competitive.
Most common myths: Postdocs can’t access services

- Postdocs have access to the same services as contract employees: IST, OHD, Staff Conference, Watcard, Lynda.com courses

- And more!
  - CCA postdoc Career Advisor
  - Writing and Communication Centre Specialist
  - Centre for Teaching Excellence postdoc teaching series (and other services)
  - Mitacs
  - Office of Research
  - English language classes (private), WCC English conversation circles

- RAs vs postdocs = difference in services
Most common myths: Research Associates are just more prestigious postdocs

- Postdocs often call themselves “Research Associate” and vice versa but these are different employee categories
- “Research Associate” is not a “better” or more prestigious position
- In fact, postdocs get more/better resources and GSPA offers resources/advocacy
- We often recommend RA appointments in cases where the appointment doesn’t meet our guidelines. Most commonly:
  - The candidate is more than 5-years post-PhD
  - The candidate is working irregular/part-time hours that preclude the PD component of postdoctoral positions
GSPA current goals

- Developing a postdoc community
- Fostering an impactful, positive, rewarding UWaterloo postdoc experience, via:
  - Social and professional development events
  - Continue advocating for postdocs
  - Revamp postdoctoral guidelines
  - Streamline the appointment process
  - Greater awareness/outreach/education to campus community
Recent accomplishments

- Revamped website (Sept 2017):
  - WCMS “responsive” site
  - New section on “incoming postdocs” with better onboarding information
  - Verified access to services/updated information
- Working group (HR, OR, IQC, Eng, GSPA, Snc)
- Consultations/interviews with all key campus partners over Spring 2017
- Draft report/recommendations
Recent accomplishments: a flurry of activity!

- Mitacs Professional Development workshops (e.g. Project Management)
- Networking lunch and learn
- Copyright, intellectual property & commercialization workshop
- Postdoc services fair and lunch
- Express entry immigration lunch and learn
- Teaching Development Seminar Series
- Non-academic career conference
- Academic career conference
- Staff conference
- Teaching and Learning conference (funded)
- Roundtable with the president
- “Getting published” lunch and learn
- Waterloo Warriors hockey game
- Niagara Falls with ELI
Recent accomplishments: a flurry of activity!

Past year (April 1 2017 to March 31 2018)

- 12 events for postdocs
- 410 postdoc registrations (191 unique postdocs)
Postdoc events

EXAMPLE.1
AVPGSPA with postdocs at Picnic in the Park, August 2017

EXAMPLE.2
Non-academic career conference, April 2017

EXAMPLE.3
Postdoc lunch and services fair, January 2018
Recent accomplishments: National Postdoc Appreciation Week 2016 & 2017
Recent accomplishments: National Postdoc Appreciation Week 2016 & 2017

- Both years: the largest NPAW in Canada with one event each day for a whole week.
- Examples of NPAW events: football game, pub night, yoga classes, lunch and learn workshops, ice-cream social, professional headshots, etc.
- Photo contest: “show us a day in the life of a postdoc”
Recent accomplishments: National Postdoc Appreciation Week 2016 & 2017

“I'm a post-doc from Australia and this photo represents my typical day at UW - cycling/coffee/emails/more coffee/reading/meetings/cycling”
Recent accomplishments: National Postdoc Appreciation Week 2016 & 2017

“Here is a pic of me (in the middle) helping our Master’s student Nachiket and PhD candidate Mohd Zeeshan put together an experiment in our quantum photonics lab”.
Next big challenge

- Standardize recruitment, hiring and appointment practices
  - Appointments are done at the department/faculty level and practices have therefore varied greatly
  - Upcoming fix: templates for recruitment
  - Upcoming fix: standardized offer letter templates
Coming soon

- Postdoc job description template
- Advertisement template
- Standardized postdoc offer template
- Non-Faculty appointment form (review/update)
- Onboarding template
- Exit questionnaire
Resources

- https://uwaterloo.ca/postdoctoral-affairs/
  - Guidelines
  - Contact details
  - Resources (forthcoming)
Questions for audience

- How is a Research Associate appointed?
- When is a Research Associate appointed?
- What parameters are used?
- When/why change from Postdoc to Research Associate?
- Visiting Scholars?