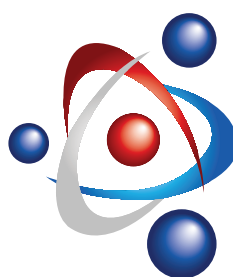


POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS: POLICY



VUT

Vaal University of Technology
Your world to a better future



Research
& Higher Degrees
"Research That Matters"

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP

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POLICIES GOVERNING POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS AT THE VAAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

The Vaal University of Technology (VUT) is developing and growing its research culture. The recruitment of Postdoctoral Fellows will play a pivotal role in developing research and postgraduate student capacity at VUT.

1. PURPOSE

To describe the terms and conditions for the award of the fellowship, tenure activities and termination of Postdoctoral Fellows (PDFs) at VUT.

2. DEFINITIONS

"Postdoctoral Fellow" is an individual holding a doctoral degree (from VUT or another University) who is engaged in a research and scholarly training for the purpose of acquiring the professional skills needed to pursue an academic career path.

"Fellowship" is the grant of money (made) available to support the Postdoctoral Fellow.

"Host" refers to the Supervisor of the Postdoctoral Fellow.

"Contract" is the agreement between the University and the Postdoctoral Fellow defining the relationship between the Director: Research and the Supervisor on the one hand and the Postdoctoral Fellow on the other, defining the expectations of each by the other.

"Conditions-of-Award" refers to the conditions of the fellowship concerned.

"Department" refers to the academic department, which has undertaken to host the Postdoctoral Fellow.

"Head of Department (HoD)" refers to the head of a department.

"DHET" refers to The Department of Higher Education and Training

"MoA" refers to Memoranda of Agreement

"MoU" refers to Memoranda of Understanding

3. THE AIM OF POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS' PROGRAMME AT THE VAAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

The programme is aimed to:

- 3.1. To provide established researchers and academic departments the opportunity to host Postdoctoral Fellows to strengthen their research cohort.
- 3.2. To provide Postdoctoral Fellows with the opportunity to develop and strengthen their research and professional skills and to transfer their acquired skills to researchers and students at VUT.
- 3.3. To provide VUT the opportunity to expand its research portfolio through new areas of research and to enhance its research output productivity through the increase of scientific publications and technology transfer.
- 3.4. To assist in the development of research capacity and the rejuvenation and transformation of the academic researcher cohort in South Africa by delivering exceptionally skilled graduates.
- 3.5. To strengthen internationalisation at VUT and expand collaborative research networks through the hosting of international Postdoctoral Fellows.

4. ADVERTISING, SELECTION AND AWARD

- 4.1. The University, as a matter of policy, will advertise all opportunities for fellowships, so that free and fair competition is ensured.
- 4.2. The relevant academic host and their department is responsible for drafting and placing the advertisement for the application of Postdoctoral Fellowships. All advertisements must take into account the formal and approved definition and comply with the approved VUT Advertising Guidelines for Postdoctoral Fellowships.
- 4.3. Selection and recruitment of applicants must be done at Central Level (by committees authorised to select such candidates) and must include the PI, Executive Director: Research, and the Head of Department. In all cases, such selection must take account of the approved definition and the Policy Document to ensure that the prospective Postdoctoral Fellow is compliant with the VUT requirements.

- 4.4. Candidates will be notified in writing if successful, and an interview by committee members will be conducted before the Postdoctoral Fellows accept and sign their contracts.
- 4.5. Postdoctoral Fellows from abroad will require a visa endorsed to conduct research (not a work permit)
- 4.6. Termination Postdoctoral Fellowships are held in terms of the standard contract.

5. BACKGROUND

- 5.1. Each Postdoctoral Fellow is managed by a Supervisor and will usually join an established research group. Postdoctoral Fellows will undertake limited supervision of post-graduate students.
- 5.2. The value derived from Postdoctoral training and the broader experience is beneficial to both the University and the country.
- 5.3. The VUT needs to consolidate its Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme in support of its research and innovation enterprise and to assist in the achievement of national, institutional and equity goals.

6. ELIGIBILITY

Prospective Postdoctoral Fellows should meet the following criteria:

- 6.1. Postdoctoral Fellows must have completed a Doctoral degree within five years of being appointed, at a higher education institution in South Africa or abroad.
- 6.2. If not yet in possession of a Doctoral degree, they need to submit a written statement from the Registrar (or equivalent) at the registered University, confirming that they have satisfactorily fulfilled the University's requirements for a Doctoral degree at the time of application for Postdoctoral Fellowship.
- 6.3. In the appointment of Postdoctoral Fellows, priority will be given to South African citizens, especially from previously designated groups, in order to address imbalances and institutional targets.

- 6.4. The candidate should preferably be less than 40 years' old.

7. CONDITIONS OF AWARD

All Postdoctoral Fellowships awards are governed by specific Conditions of Award. Such conditions provide a framework for the research/study to be undertaken and basic conditions under which the Postdoctoral Fellow is appointed;

- 7.1. A Postdoctoral Fellow is expected to engage in full-time research on an approved research area, supervised by an Established Researcher in one of the Faculties at the University.
- 7.2. Postdoctoral Fellows are not allowed to be employed at the VUT or hold any other permanent position at the time of taking up the fellowship. They must not have previously held any professional or permanent academic positions prior to taking up a Postdoctoral Fellowship position at the VUT.
- 7.3. Postdoctoral Fellows are expected to mentor and co-supervise post-graduate students in the Faculty. It is the responsibility of the Supervisor to monitor that additional work does not distract the Postdoctoral Fellow from their work.
- 7.4. Postdoctoral Fellows may not register for a degree at VUT or any other institution during their term of the fellowship.
- 7.5. The University does not guarantee employment of a Postdoctoral Fellow, during or after completion of the Postdoctoral Fellowship contract. Such expectation must never be created or entertained.

8. TENURE

Each Postdoctoral Fellowship is awarded for one year only. Fellowships and tenures are renewable up to a maximum of two years. Thereafter, only in exceptional cases, with satisfactory reports, which includes units of DHET accredited publications will tenure up to five years be considered.

9. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

Expectations from Postdoctoral Fellows, as agreed upon in individual MoUs, will vary depending on

their hosting Department. However, there are a number of general expectations that VUT has for its Postdoctoral Fellows, which include the following:

- 9.1. Develop research independence under the guidance of the host or academic mentor.
- 9.2. Submitting accurate and meticulous research report data and activities to the relevant host.
- 9.3. Participating in outputs-driven research and research collaborations. Thus; articles in journals, books, or book chapters accredited by the DHET should be achievable within the duration of the fellowship, as per MoU. An average peer-reviewed research output of at least two accredited publication units per annum during your stay. It is understood that most of the publications will not arise in year one. This implies that year two of your Fellowship should see four or more publication units.
- 9.4. Furthermore, these outputs should be published internationally. Ideally, the research should be published in journals that are found in the ISI index of journals. If there is a particular reason why it is more appropriate to publish the work in local journals, then they should be published in DHET 'accredited journals'.
- 9.5. Conference attendance – this will be guided by the Conference attendance funding policy.
- 9.6. Contribution to the research ethos of the host environment. This contribution could come in the form of participating in meetings, research seminars (especially those involving postgraduate students) and knowledge transfer to colleagues and students.
- 9.7. Participating in supervising and mentoring of postgraduate students.
- 9.8. A contribution to the operation of a research laboratory (where appropriate). This contribution may involve calibrating instruments, advising postgraduate students on operating conditions, giving instrument training, commissioning preventative maintenance, etc.
- 9.9. Submission of progress reports to funders, where and when required.

10. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SUPERVISOR

The Supervisor is responsible for the following:

- 10.1. Providing the Postdoctoral Fellow with acceptable research conditions as agreed and stipulated in the MoU and keeping an ongoing record of the research done by the fellow.
- 10.2. Meeting with the Postdoctoral Fellow on a regular basis and providing guidance for the research undertaken by Postdoctoral Fellow.
- 10.3. Ensuring that the Postdoctoral Fellow is familiar with all institutional policies related to research.
- 10.4. Ensuring that sufficient research funding is available for the Postdoctoral Fellow to complete his/her research projects on time.
- 10.5. Your potential Supervisor will help you to obtain the necessary funding by assisting you to write funding applications to the University or to external funders, like the NRF.
- 10.6. Clearly communicating the required working hours in writing to the Postdoctoral Fellow before the uptake of the fellowship.
- 10.7. Informing the Research Directorate Office and the Postdoctoral Fellow in writing of the premature termination of a fellowship, in terms of this policy.
- 10.8. Informing the Research Directorate Office in writing when fellowships are extended after the completion of a term, and adhering to the required renewal process for the extension period.
- 10.9. Ensuring that the proposed research project is structured in such a way that the desired outputs are achievable within the duration of the fellowship.
- 10.10. The Supervisor must provide the space and infrastructure necessary to enable the Postdoctoral Fellow to carry out her/his research work effectively.
- 10.11. Your potential host will help you secure the necessary funding by assisting you to write funding applications to the University or through one of the external funders, like the NRF.
- 10.12. Ensuring that publications and supporting

documents are submitted to the Research Directorate Office for submission to DHET.

11. ROLES 7 RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCH DIRECTORATE OFFICE

- 11.1. The Research Directorate Office will be charged with the responsibility of administering Postdoctoral Fellowships and ensuring that appointments, tenures, activities and terminations comply with these policies and that the terms of individual MoU are complied with.
- 11.2. The Research Directorate Office will continually monitor the progress of the Postdoctoral Fellows to ensure that VUT strategic objectives are obtained. (Refer to paragraph 14.1)
- 11.3. The University will ensure that an enabling institutional environment is provided to Postdoctoral Fellows.
- 11.4. The Research Directorate Office will also provide assistance with obtaining the necessary funding.

12. POSITION, FACILITIES AND BENEFITS

- 12.1. Postdoctoral Fellows are professional/ academic trainees and neither students nor employees.
- 12.2. The Postdoctoral Fellow should be given adequate working space, equipment and basic amenities. Facilities and benefits provided to the Postdoctoral Fellow through his or her host Department should be clearly described in the MoU.

13. CONTRACTS - MEMORANDA OF AGREEMENT

- 13.1. The Postdoctoral Fellow must enter into a legally binding contract with VUT, through the Research Directorate Office and Human Resources and with the Faculty/Host Department.
- 13.2. Such agreements should embody the provisions of this policy and also set out performance targets.
- 13.3. The contract will also protect both parties and provide recourse to both parties in the event of

a dispute or complaint.

- 13.4. The contract will ensure compliance with the University's code of conduct, policies and conditions.
- 13.5. The contract is a bilateral agreement between the Postdoctoral Fellow and the Supervisor and provides a framework for the work to be done and a means of monitoring the expectations agreed upon by both parties.

14. PROGRESS REPORTING

- 14.1. Postdoctoral Fellows are required to submit bi-annual progress reports to the Research Directorate Office, including two DHET accredited units per annum (Refer to paragraph 9.3).

15. INDUCTION/ORIENTATION

- 15.1. The Supervisor will provide the entering Postdoctoral Fellow with information packs on the Vaal University of Technology and the geography of its precincts, guidance to accessing the amenities and facilities available, and ongoing service and advice.
- 15.2. The Supervisor will provide the new Postdoctoral Fellow with an orientation to the department and an introduction to the Executive Dean of the Faculty.

16. FUNDING

- 16.1. Postdoctoral Fellow awards are funded from a variety of sources.
- 16.2. In all cases, Fellowship funding will be administered by the Research Directorate.
- 16.3. Postdoctoral Fellows and their Supervisors are required to inform the Research Directorate Office when a Postdoctoral Fellow terminates his/her tenure at the University.
- 16.4. Where such termination occurs before the Postdoctoral Fellow has completed their research and/or full tenure, the University reserves the right to recover all or some of the funds that have been paid to the Postdoctoral Fellow in advance.
- 16.5. The Postdoctoral Fellow position is normally exempt from taxation and application for

such exemption will be made on behalf of the successful candidate. The position of Postdoctoral Fellow carries no fringe benefits such as annual leave.

17. CODE OF CONDUCT AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES AND COMPLAINTS

- 17.1. The Postdoctoral Fellow must subscribe to the University's code of conduct and policies and comply with conditions as set out in the MoA.
- 17.2. In the event of any dispute, the Postdoctoral Fellow will have recourse to a specific Grievance Procedure and will have the right of representation in any hearing that may result from a dispute or serious complaint.

18. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 18.1. Because Postdoctoral Fellows are essentially professional/academic trainees and neither students nor employees, the Conditions of Award and the contract must describe the kind of training and work to be done by both the Postdoctoral Fellow and the Supervisor.
- 18.2. In addition to this, the University may, from time to time, provide professional development courses and seminars to assist the Postdoctoral Fellows.
- 18.3. The Postdoctoral Fellows may organise seminars and training courses among themselves or for senior students in their specific areas of research, and such events will be hosted and accommodated by the Research Directorate Office of Vaal University of Technology.

19. RENEWAL OF CONTRACT

- 19.1. Renewal of the fellowship is conditional to the Postdoctoral Fellow having fulfilled their contractual obligations, and to the availability of funds.
- 19.2. It is the responsibility of the Supervisor to initiate the process for the renewal of the Postdoctoral Fellowship at least three months before the end of the original fellowship period.
- 19.3. At the beginning of the final month of the fellowship period, the Postdoctoral Fellow and

host are co-responsible for the submission of an application for the renewal of the fellowship at Research Directorate Office.

20. TERMINATION

- 20.1. A Postdoctoral Fellow's tenure is terminated annually, unless renewal conditions are met, as outlined in section 19 and MoA, and which has been approved by the Vaal University of Technology.
- 20.2. The University reserves the right to request the refund of any Postdoctoral Fellowship funds paid to the Postdoctoral Fellow should the Postdoctoral Fellow terminate his/her contract prior to its completion.
- 20.3. Should a Postdoctoral Fellow wish to terminate his/her fellowship prior to the date agreed upon in the MoU, he/she should give at least thirty days written notice to the Supervisor.
- 20.4. Should the Supervisor wish to terminate the hosting of a Postdoctoral Fellow, he/she needs to inform the Research Directorate Office and Postdoctoral Fellow in writing, (electronic or hard copy), at least thirty days in advance. If required, the host and Postdoctoral Fellow will have recourse to the Postdoctoral dispute resolution processes of the University.
- 20.5. A Postdoctoral Fellow and his/her host are required to inform Research Directorate Office and submit an "exit form" when the Postdoctoral Fellow terminates his/her tenure at the University. Where such termination occurs before the Postdoctoral Fellow has completed her/his research or full tenure, the University reserves the right to recover all or some of the funds that have been paid to the Postdoctoral Fellow in advance.
- 20.6. The registration of a Postdoctoral Fellow may be canceled at any time owing to a material breach of contract or on disciplinary grounds following a hearing.

21. LEAVE POLICIES:

Leave, Sick leave, and Maternity / Paternity leave policies need to be received from HR/M. Kaniki.

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