



To: Penn Research Community

From: Marta Bartholomew, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

Re: **Visa Sponsorship Duration for Foreign National Postdoctoral Researchers and Fellows**

Date: December 12, 2023

We are pleased to announce that changes to the work visa sponsorship, facilitated through J-1 or H-1B visa sponsorship, for Postdoctoral Researchers and Fellows will include a multi-year option at the discretion of the faculty mentor, effective January 8, 2023. Postdoctoral appointments will continue to be for one year and may be renewed annually based on satisfactory performance and availability of funding. Please note, extension of visa sponsorship does not guarantee reappointment or continued employment.

Current Policy and Process

Currently visa sponsorship for most foreign national postdoctoral researchers and fellows is tied to the one-year appointment. Visa sponsorship is extended for an additional one-year increment upon successful reappointment.

Revised Policy and Process

Recognizing the time and financial burden of the visa renewal process on many of the University's foreign national postdocs, faculty mentors now have the option of offering the standard one-year appointment with a visa sponsorship duration that is multi-year. The visa sponsorship can be extended based on 1) the faculty member's intention to reappoint a postdoc contingent upon satisfactory performance, 2) the years of available funding to support the postdoctoral position, and 3) compliance with the 5-year total postdoc appointment. This can be done upon initial appointment or reappointment per faculty mentor discretion.

If the faculty member chooses to offer a longer visa sponsorship duration to be reflected in the DS-2019, the appropriate language that is required for the appointment letter is offered below. This language must be included in the letter as documentation for the visa sponsorship application processed by ISSS. At least one specific funding source must be included with examples suggested in the paragraph below. Examples include "[mentor's name] start-up funds", "[funding program name] fellowship", or "grant name". The time requested for the visa sponsorship must not exceed the 5-year total appointment period per university policy. Please further note that H-1B sponsorship can only be extended in three-

year increments. Postdocs that hold a visa other than a J-1 or H-1B should contact ISSS to determine their eligibility for longer visa sponsorship.

If a postdoc is in the biomedical sciences, Biomedical Postdoctoral Programs will provide additional guidance specific for the generation of appointment letters.

Consultation with ISSS

Requesting a multi-year visa sponsorship duration does not guarantee approval. ISSS will review the appointment letter and determine eligibility.

Termination of Employment and Visa Sponsorship

Please note that a visa sponsorship by the University ends upon the postdoc's termination date. If a postdoc is terminated earlier than the end date of the visa sponsorship, the termination date will supersede the original end date for sponsorship and the department is responsible to notify ISSS. A multi-year visa sponsorship does not guarantee reappointment or continued employment.

Virtual Townhalls

Postdocs, faculty, and administrators are invited to a virtual presentation by the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and ISSS to learn more about the changes to visa sponsorship duration for foreign national postdocs.

January 17 @ 4pm <https://upenn.zoom.us/j/96054486117>

January 23 @ 12pm <https://upenn.zoom.us/j/91438278095>

Appointment Letter Language (example)

The mentor has sufficient funds in the "RO1 funds" (multiple funding sources can be listed) to sponsor you for the period of 10/01/2022 to 09/30/2027 and has the intention to extend the appointment during the funding period depending on your performance. This could be considered in the preparation of your visa documents by ISSS.

From: [Silverman, Celestine](#)
To: SRBA-CENTRALADMIN-L@LISTS.UPENN.EDU; SRBA-SCHOOLCENTER-L@LISTS.UPENN.EDU
Subject: Options for visa sponsorship duration for foreign national postdocs
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 9:30:00 AM
Attachments: [OPA Memo_postdocvisasponsorshipduration_121223.pdf](#)

The following message is being sent on behalf of Marta Bartholomew in the Office of the Vice Provost for Research (OVPR):

Good morning,

Attached please find a memo to the research community at Penn regarding options for visa sponsorship duration for foreign national postdocs (also available [here](#)).

Please review the attached memo and note that the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and International Students and Scholar Services will be holding two townhall meetings open to postdocs, faculty, and staff to discuss implementation of the change. Please share this information with colleagues and staff as appropriate. The memo has been shared with all postdocs and will be circulated more broadly to faculty next week.

Townhalls: Visa Sponsorship Duration for Foreign National Postdoctoral Researchers and Fellows

January 17 @ 4pm <https://upenn.zoom.us/j/96054486117>

January 23 @ 12pm <https://upenn.zoom.us/j/91438278095>

Sincerely,
Marta

Marta Bartholomew, MBA (she/her)
Director of Research Programs and Communications
Office of the Vice Provost for Research (OVPR)

Director of Postdoctoral Affairs
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