

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs
Guidelines for Postdoctoral Groups at Stanford University

Introduction

The postdoctoral scholar population represents a significant part of the community at Stanford University that is conducting research, receiving training and interacting with a large network in their fields of study. A Postdoctoral scholar is a trainee in residence at Stanford University pursuing advanced studies beyond the doctoral level in preparation for an independent career (see Stanford Posdoc Handbook for more information: <http://postdocs.stanford.edu/handbook>).

Postdoctoral scholars are often independent within their academic and social structures that exist in their departments or labs. Most labs at Stanford have less than 3 postdocs at any given time, and a significant number have only one postdoc. As a result, many postdocs often find groups or organizations that provide space for community, social or academic support essential to their experience at Stanford.

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) oversees postdoc scholar groups that wish to act in Stanford's name and be supported by the University.

The following are the guidelines for these postdoc scholar groups, which should follow the policies and procedures set therein, and other applicable policies and procedures set forth by other University offices.

Table of Contents:

- I. Before You start a New Postdoc Group
- II. Key Components of Starting a Postdoc Group
- III. Quick Outline of the Process To Establish a Group
- IV. University Requirements
- V. Financial Considerations and Policies
- VI. Event Planning Considerations and Policies
- VII. Elements of A Group Charter
- VIII. Annual Reporting Requirements
- IX. Ineligibility Criteria

I. Before You Start a New Postdoc Group:

1. Consider the following questions:

- i. Is there already a group on campus that we can join to accomplish our intention?
- ii. Do we have the time and energy to start and maintain a postdoctoral scholar group?
- iii. What do we want the organization to do?
- iv. What would be the mission/scope and purpose of the group?
- v. What activities would further that purpose?
- vi. How would we garner the necessary resources to support these activities?
- vii. Why would Stanford postdoctoral scholars want to be a part of this group?

2. Review the policies and guidelines established to support postdoc groups.

All student groups at Stanford must adhere to University policy, and in the case of postdoc scholar groups, to the guidelines established by the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. In the absence of a clear guideline, the group leadership

should reach out to the Associate Director for Programs at the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs for guidance. The intent of these policies and guidelines is to help avoid undue risk toward group members or Stanford University.

I. Policies and guidelines to follow are:

- **Stanford University Policy Summaries and Information for Student and Leadership Activities:** <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/sal/policy>
- Office of Postdoctoral Affairs Postdoc Groups Guidelines: <http://postdocs.stanford.edu/...>
- **Critical Policies:** <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/sal/manage/critical-policies>
- **Stanford University's Administrative Guide:** <http://adminguide.stanford.edu/>
- **Respectful Workplace Statement** (Applies to Postdoctoral Scholars in the School of Medicine): <http://med.stanford.edu/academicaffairs/handbook/chapt10.html#10.16>
- **University Code of Conduct:** <http://adminguide.stanford.edu/1.pdf>
- **Fundamental Standard:** <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/judicialaffairs/policy/fundamental-standard>
- **Sponsorship/Co-Sponsorship:** <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/sal/policies/sponsorship>

3. Meet with the Associate Director for Programs in the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs for initial discussion and feedback on the group charter, goals, and financial plan.

II. Key Components of Starting a Postdoc Group:

- I. The purpose of the group is in line with the educational mission, policies, and procedures of Stanford University.
- II. The group serves an unmet need within the postdoc community and appeals to a significant number of postdocs or groups of postdocs. The mission of the new group should be sufficiently distinct from that of existing groups.
- III. Group membership and leadership positions are open to any postdoc appointed at Stanford University.
- IV. Group activities are open to all postdocs and announced widely on a regular basis.
- V. The group has established:
 - A charter
 - Plan of initial activities:
 - Programmatic activities for at least two forthcoming academic terms
 - Recruitment of members
 - Engagement of the postdoc community; i.e., outreach and publicity
 - Possible funding sources (if applicable) and proposed budget(s)

III. Quick Outline of the Process:

- I. Initial Feedback Session with OPA's Associate Director
- II. Put together the materials for your Key Components listed above and submit it to the OPA's Associate Director
- III. Receive Response from OPA
- IV. Approval by OPA signals readiness to proceed with the plan of activities. If applicable, a group PTA will be arranged through OPA

IV. University Requirements for Postdoc Groups to Operate as a Stanford Group:

1. **Meeting the key components mentioned above and sign-off by the OPA.**

2. **Compliance with all local, state and federal laws, OPA and University policies:** Some important ones to review include: sponsorships of activities, benefit fundraisers, high impact events, autonomy, membership, nondiscrimination, confidential data, off-campus fundraising, co-sponsorship, travel & transportation and youth programs, alcohol policy (these can be found at the Stanford University Policy Summaries and Information for Student and Leadership Activities webpage).
3. **Activities that do not create undue risk or liability:** Groups and activities that are done in the name of Stanford University in a way that are deemed by the University to create undue risk to our postdoctoral scholars and others are not permitted. Examples of these activities involve some level of physical activity or travel that may be difficult to supervise or invitations of outside speakers.

V. Financial Considerations and Policies

A Stanford postdoc student group has certain fiduciary responsibilities. Group leadership must adhere to financial policies, procedures or requirements, which include:

- i. Initiating, leading, and making all decisions for activities or events must be made by the Group. Outside entities or individuals may not use the group in order to enter or access University facilities or postdocs. In other words, requests from off-campus individuals/entities must be evaluated by the group in light of University policies and procedures.
- ii. The group must develop and execute all advertising and promotion, widely to the postdoc community.
- iii. The group cannot enter into any contracts and agreements in Stanford University's name.
- iv. Group expenses from its allocated budget with the University must be pre-approved by the OPA Associate Director.
- v. Any sponsorship of group events, financial or in kind, from outside entities must be pre-approved by the Associate Director of Postdoctoral Affairs. Plans for sponsorships by other organizations/departments within Stanford should be discussed with the OPA Associate Director in advance.
- vi. All sponsorships are subject to review and approval by Stanford University offices or Stanford Events.
- vii. Fundraising by the group is prohibited. Applicable University policies govern all fundraising activities for cash, goods or services.
- viii. Benefit fundraisers are events whose proceeds will be donated to a US based 501(c)3 non-profit organization. All benefit events and activities must receive prior OPA approval speakers are arranged, sponsors are sought or advertising conducted
- ix. On-campus resources should be exhausted before considering off-campus sponsors of events. Most postdoc programs can adequately be funded by on-campus sources.
- x. Related policy information can be found:
 - o Sponsorship/Co-Sponsorship: <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/sal/policies/sponsorship>
 - o [University's Administrative Guide](#) (Memo 15.5 - Ownership and Use of Stanford Name and Trademarks).
 - o [University's Administrative Guide](#) (Memo 14 - Academic and Business Relationships with Third Parties).

Additional information can be found at:
<http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/sal/manage/off-campus>
<http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/sal/policies/benefit-fundraiser>

Special Note Regarding Sales, Fundraisers, Employee Recruitment or Commercial/corporate sponsorships from a Non-Stanford entity: Postdoc groups must consult OPA before engaging in any agreements or plans for sales, benefit fundraisers or commercial/corporate contribution from a non-Stanford entity. Stanford's resources support the University's mission of creating, preserving and disseminating knowledge. The University's assets must be used for these purposes, and not for the personal gain of individuals' or outside parties' uses that do not further Stanford's academic objectives. The University receives frequent requests for access to its resources by outside entities, typically in exchange for some form of compensation to Stanford. Many of these, if granted, would constitute unrelated business activities.

- i. <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/sal/policies/commercial-activity>
- ii. University's Administrative Guide (Memo 15.3 – Unrelated Business Activity).

VI. Event Planning Considerations and Policies

- i. Postdoctoral scholar group events must be initiated, led, and implemented by the postdoc group. The group may not be used as a proxy for an outside entity or person to access or use University facilities or reach members of the postdoc community.
- ii. Events must be open to the campus community and/or the postdoc-wide community within a department, school or university-wide. Events may have limited capacity, but no closed events a priori are allowed.
- iii. The postdoctoral group must submit a 1-2 page Event Plan to the Associate Director of OPA for approval, at least 5 business days prior to the event date, that includes:
 - o Title, day, time and location of event
 - o Resources needed and/or committed (financial, manpower, etc.) to run the event
 - o Names of all speakers and their affiliation
 - o Contact information of postdoc event organizer(s)
 - o Publicity plan
 - o Full disclosure of any co-sponsorships within Stanford or outside of Stanford, in kind or financially. This disclosure must be included in all event publicity materials as "Co-Sponsored by XXXXX"
- iv. Any outside speakers must be pre-approved by the Associate Director for Postdoctoral Affairs, and where applicable, other offices at Stanford, such as the Office of International Affairs in the case of foreign speakers.
- v. International visitors participating in a group's event must be cleared by the Director in the Office of International Affairs (OIA) before arriving at Stanford. OIA is located at: Wallenberg Hall, Rm. 229; 450 Serra Mall, Building 160; Stanford, CA 94305.
An authorized representative of the group must be in attendance for group-sponsored events.
- vi. Any activities that invite prospective employers to Stanford must be planned in conjunction with the Career Development Center (CDC) or the School of Medicine Career Center (SoMCC).
- vii. Events conduct is guided by Stanford's Fundamental Standard. Implicit in the Standard is the understanding that postdocs are responsible for making their own decisions and accepting the consequences of those decisions. Activity planners are responsible for planning and carrying out events in compliance with the alcohol policy. Refer to the Administrative guide: http://adminguide.stanford.edu/23_6.pdf
- viii. should follow the University-wide code of conduct, include
- ix. Expenses should be handled through the group's account within the OPA and funds should be secured ahead of any commitments. All receipts must be provided to OPA.
- x. Events that significantly impact the University or bring high-profile speakers may require approval by the Committee on Public Events (COPE). For more information visit <https://stanfordevents.stanford.edu>. **This may take more than the required 5 business days**, so plan ahead.

VII. Elements of a Group Charter

The charter should include the following articles and should also include thought and adherence to the general guidelines required by OPA as the group forms and becomes active.

1. Article 1 – Group Name

- Choose a name that reflects 1) the purpose or mission of the group, and 2) the constituency it serves.

2. Article 2 – Mission

- The mission should be a clear and focused 2-3 sentence description of the purpose, scope and nature of activities.
- The purpose should be to serve postdoctoral scholars at Stanford, and may add further specific details.

3. Article 3 – Activities and Scope

- Describe the nature of the group’s activities. This will help interested postdoctoral scholars understand what the group will actually do.

4. Article 4-- Membership

- Describe how one becomes and remains a member of the group. Also include a process with fair and objective criteria for the removal of members.
- Only Stanford postdoctoral scholars may be leaders of a postdoc group. Faculty, staff, and other non-postdoctoral scholars may participate in activities but cannot serve as leaders or full members.
- Open to all postdoctoral scholars at Stanford University

5. Leadership Structure/Officers

- Group leadership must consist of at least two required positions, President and Financial Officer, for the group to gain, and continue to have, status within Stanford.
- Groups will include one Advisor outside of OPA to provide guidance and support to the group’s efforts.
- The structure, titles, and responsibilities of the two leadership roles, and any other roles.
- Group leaders must be currently registered as postdoctoral scholars through the OPA at all time of their term.
- Describe how, by whom, and when leaders are elected and removed. Officers should be elected by the membership in a democratic process, not selected by outgoing leaders.
- Criteria for officer election and length of term.
- Provide leadership training and orientation for new officers.
- A removal procedure should include fair due process and respect for the individual under consideration.

6. Decision-Making Process

- Describe how group decisions (e.g. budget, programs, and policies) are made, and who is involved.
- Although there are many models a group can follow, decision-making should be based on democratic ideals.
- Procedure to Amend Charter: Describe the process for proposing and adopting changes to the charter/by-laws. The adoption process should be by a vote. Different groups have different thresholds: majority, super-majority (two-thirds), consensus.

7. Dissolution of Group

- Postdoc Groups that are without identified leaders are put in hiatus.
- Groups may be reinstated upon the identification of new leaders.

8. Policies & Standards:

- The charter should include recognition of and adherence to the policies outline by OPA and the University.
- Annual reporting responsibilities to the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs.

9. Financial Procedures, Practices, and Policies

- Develop an annual **budget** plan that will encompass the year’s outlook and rationale for funding.
- Clearly define a process for any **roles or members** who may hold fiduciary responsibilities for the group.

- Setup an **account** with the OPA.

VIII. Annual Reporting Requirement

Postdoc Groups supported by Stanford University must report on an annual basis to the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. The Annual Report should include information of the events carried out by the group in the prior year and budget spent, the names of event co-sponsors, if any, names of departing and new leadership, budget and activities planned for the coming year.

The annual report is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the impact and contributions and accomplishments by the group and its partners, and can be means to gain further engagement by postdocs, raise financial support from Stanford.

IX. Ineligibility Criteria

Groups whose purpose, mission or events meet the following criteria may not operate in the name of Stanford University, or on the Stanford University campus, as a postdoc group:

- i. unrelated to OPA, Stanford University or postdoctoral scholars
- ii. violate OPA, Stanford or other broader policies, regulations or laws
- iii. create an undue risk towards Stanford postdoctoral scholars and other program participants
- iv. violate Stanford's non-profit 501(3)c status
- v. do not target or serve Stanford postdoctoral scholars
- vi. exclude certain postdocs from participation
- vii. violate its stated charter