

# BNL Postdoc Mentoring Committee Report

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# Charter

Examine current BNL policies and practices regarding post-docs and make recommendations as to what changes need to be implemented to enhance both the Lab's ability to attract top quality talent, and its reputation as an organization that develops the skills needed to successfully pursue a scientific career.

## Recommendation 1:

### Policy Statement and Guidelines

- Purpose of post-doctoral appointment
- Role and responsibilities of Laboratory
- Role of the supervisor (mentor)
- Role and responsibilities of post-doc

# Purpose

*A postdoctoral scholar ("postdoc") is an individual holding a doctoral degree who is engaged in a temporary period of mentored research and/or scholarly training for the purpose of acquiring the professional skills needed to pursue a career path of his or her choosing.*

Expectation is that BNL will provide an experience that will expand and develop the technical skills needed for a successful and productive scientific career.

# Role and Responsibilities of BNL

- Provide opportunities to acquire the skills needed to conduct a successful scientific career at BNL or elsewhere.
- Provide the structure to promote interactions between post docs, between postdocs and other scientists at the Laboratory, and the general scientific community.
- Provide opportunities for professional development
- Oversee the assignments of postdocs to assure that activities are consistent with the career development obligations of the laboratory.

# Responsibilities of Advisor

- Assign tasks/activities that will lead to the development of the scientific and technical skills needed for a successful career in scientific research.
- Provide regular professional evaluation and feedback.
- Provide opportunities for professional development.
  - Drafting manuscripts
  - Presentations at scientific meetings
  - Constructing proposals

# Responsibilities of the Post-doc

- Interact with supervisor to develop a mutually agreeable set of activities that will meet the research needs of the supervisor and provide the opportunity to develop the skills and experience needed to pursue an independent career in scientific research.
- Actively participate in regular evaluations of progress and direction of research with supervisor.
- Actively seek opportunities for professional development.
  - Participate in Workshops
  - Drafting journal articles and reports
  - Presentations at scientific meetings

## Recommendation 2:

### Establish an Office of Post-doctoral Affairs

- Responsibilities
  - Orientation
  - Employee assistance
  - Ombudsman
  - Social Activities
  - Organizing Professional development activities
  - Interaction with BNL Association of Students and Post-docs
- Staffing (at least 50% level)
  - Office Educational Programs?
  - Human Resources?



## Recommendation 3:

### Setting goals and expectations

- Individual development plans (IDPs) for Post-docs?
  - Planning process that identifies development needs and career objectives
  - Serves as a communication tool between post-docs and supervisors
  - A document that incorporates equally the postdoc's career and training goals and the mentor's research goals.

# Setting goals and expectations

## Example from Argonne



### Initial Postdoctoral Appointment Discussion

Postdoctoral Appointee	Payroll #	Division	Advisor/Supervisor						
Postdoctoral appointments are temporary positions with fixed ending dates intended to provide a program of advanced research training. This discussion sets initial goals and clarifies expectations.									
<p><b>Start Date:</b></p> <p><b>Career Objective(s):</b> <i>What kind of employment does the appointee want to seek when the postdoctoral appointment is completed? This question should lead to a discussion of the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for that kind of position.</i></p> <p><b>How does this Postdoctoral appointment contribute to those objectives?</b> <i>What does this early career scientist or engineer need to accomplish/learn during his/her time at ANL to support those career goals? What are the outcomes he/she needs? Publications? Presentations? Workshops? Collaborations? Others?</i></p> <p><b>Research focus and objective(s):</b> <i>What is the research focus that supports both programmatic goals and the career objectives of the young researcher? What is expected of the appointee to accomplish the research goals?</i></p> <p><b>Professional Development:</b> <i>Identify additional areas that he/she needs to learn about to increase chances of success as a researcher. The following areas are suggested by the National Academy of Sciences<sup>1</sup> as critical to succeed as a researcher: presentation skills, grant writing skills, collaborative skills, time management, networking, and understanding intellectual property issues. This both broadens the appointee's understanding of what is required of a researcher and encourages him/her to "take ownership" of his/her career and in taking advantage of opportunities at the laboratory.</i></p>									
1. Enhancing the Postdoctoral Experience for Scientists and Engineers: A Guide for Postdoctoral Scholars, Advisers, Institutions, Funding Organizations, and Disciplinary Societies. National Academy of Sciences. National Academy Press (2000), Washington DC.									
<p><b>Signatures</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>_____ Postdoctoral Appointee</td> <td>_____ Date</td> </tr> <tr> <td>_____ Advisor</td> <td>_____ Date</td> </tr> <tr> <td>_____ Division Director</td> <td>_____ Date</td> </tr> </table>				_____ Postdoctoral Appointee	_____ Date	_____ Advisor	_____ Date	_____ Division Director	_____ Date
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_____ Advisor	_____ Date								
_____ Division Director	_____ Date								
<p><i>Statements made during this process are not intended and should not be interpreted as express or implied promises of future training, promotions, salary increases, bonuses or continued employment.</i></p>									

*Use additional pages or back of this page if necessary.*

# Recommendation 4:

## Evaluating Progress

Regularly scheduled performance evaluations at minimum annually on the anniversary of employment.



### Postdoctoral Performance Evaluation Performance Period from to

Postdoctoral Appointee/Fellow	Payroll #	Division	Advisor/Supervisor
<b>A. MENTORING PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS</b>			
1. Did the meetings between the postdoc and mentor take place at least quarterly? If not, give an explanation			
2. Briefly discuss the productivity of the meetings			
3. Briefly discuss the effect of the meetings on the professional development of the postdoc			
<b>B. SCIENTIFIC OR TECHNOLOGICAL ACHIEVEMENTS</b>			
1. Accomplishments			
2. Publications			
3. Contributed and Invited Talks			
4. Collaborations			
<b>C. PERFORMANCE FOCUS:</b> Areas of relative strength as an early career researcher.			
<b>D. DEVELOPMENT FOCUS:</b> Areas of potential growth which might lead to increased effectiveness and a plan to address those areas.			

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# Recommendation 5:

## Evaluating Program status

- Purpose
  - Determine whether postdoctoral experience is meeting expectations
    - Scientific and technical skills
    - Scientific productivity
    - Career preparation
  - Evaluate effectiveness and value of BNL policies and programs.
  - Provide feedback to supervisor
    - Work assignments
    - Mentoring effectiveness
    - Etc
- Method-in service and exit surveys