

Research Administration Practices (RAP) Sessions

Postdoctoral Appointments and Fellowships

May 1, 2024

Colleen Leslie, *Assistant Provost for Research Administration, VPR*

Ann Skoczenski, *Director of Postdoctoral Services, VPR*

Laureen Horton, *Assistant Director, RAS Fellowships Lead Liaison*

Sharon Ray, *Associate Director, RAS International Lead Liaison*

Bernadette Vallely, *Team Manager, RAS, NIH Lead Liaison*

Introductions

Colleen Leslie

Assistant Provost

for Research Administration, VPR

with

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What is a postdoc?



“An individual who has received a doctoral degree (or equivalent)



and is engaged in a temporary and defined period of



mentored advanced training to enhance the professional skills and research independence



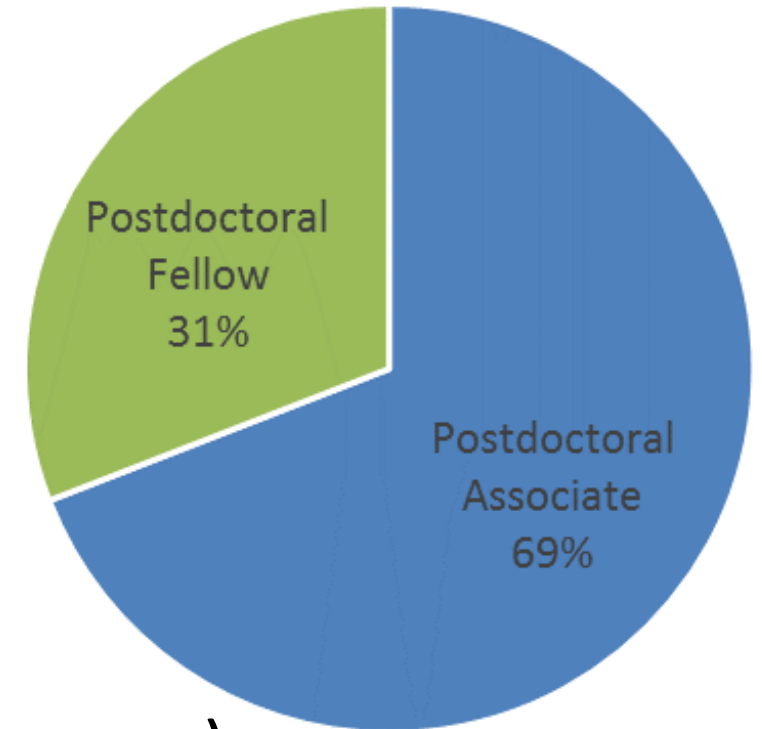
needed to **pursue their chosen career path**”



- NPA, NIH, and NSF definition

MIT's postdoctoral scholars

- Approximately 1500 postdocs
- Two appointment types;
 - Postdoc Associate: employee
 - Postdoc Fellow: non-employee
- Approx. 65-70% international
- Avg. postdoc term is 2 years (longer in life sciences)
- Avg. turnover of ~500 postdocs each year



postdocs.mit.edu

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Position](#)

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MIT Postdoctoral Services

Postdoctoral scholars with questions may reach out to their key administrative contact or email Postdoctoral Services.

Postdoc minimum salaries will increase to \$66,950 in 2024

Resources

[Information for New Postdocs](#)

[Benefits](#)

[Housing](#)

[Looking for a Postdoc Position?](#)

[Questions? Need help? Contact us \[email\]](#)

Related Links

[Career Advising](#)

[International Scholars](#)

[MIT Postdoctoral Association](#)

[Work-Life Center](#)

[Writing/Communication Center](#)

Central Support and oversight of postdocs

○ **Vice President for Research**

- Responsible for stewarding MIT's research enterprise and fostering an outstanding research environment for MIT's faculty, postdocs, students and staff

○ **Postdoctoral Services/Office of VPR**

- Provides central oversight for all matters related to postdoctoral scholars
- Ensures that the policies, procedures and resources support a positive and productive postdoctoral experience
- Advises and supports the Postdoctoral Association
- Provides programming and resources to support professional development, often in collaboration with MIT Career Advising and Professional Development
- Works in close collaboration with the schools the college, HR and others

○ **Faculty Postdoc Advisory Committee – appointed by the VPR**

- Provides input and feedback to the Vice President for Research and the Postdoctoral Association

Local Support and oversight of postdocs

○ **Departments, Labs, Centers and Institutes**

- Primary point of contact for postdocs
- Fosters a welcoming and inclusive environment
- Extend offer letters, process visa requests and appointments
- Advise PIs on local practices, and interpretation and application of policies
- Assist postdocs and PIs in navigating difficult situations

○ **Deans' Offices**

- Review and approve postdoc appointments, advising on questions about appointment eligibility, funding, etc.
- Review requests for postdocs to engage in teaching and/or consulting activities
- Review requests for *ad hoc* PI status for postdocs

Postdoctoral scholars: MIT's definitions

5.3.2 Postdoctoral Associate, Senior Postdoctoral Associate

- Postdoctoral associates come to MIT to develop their scholarly competence, working under the supervision of MIT faculty members. Appointments to this academic staff rank are of limited term and are designed for those who have recently received the doctorate. This appointment category is comparable in purpose to the postdoctoral fellow, but is distinguished by the fact that the postdoctoral associate is employed by the Institute and afforded the benefits and privileges associated with staff employment. (See [Section 7.4 Benefits for Faculty and Staff Members](#).) Incumbents are not accorded principal investigator status and do not receive consulting privileges.
- The postdoctoral associate appointment is not intended for long-term, indefinite, or career appointments or even short-term appointments where the primary goal is to advance a principal investigator's research. Appointments are made to academic departments or laboratories/centers with the approval of the department head or laboratory/center director and may require senior officer approval. Appointments are usually for not less than one term and are normally not renewed beyond a total of four years as either a postdoctoral associate or fellow. Extension for a fifth year requires approval of the cognizant dean.

5.3.3 Postdoctoral Fellow, Senior Postdoctoral Fellow, Research Fellow

- Postdoctoral and research fellows come to MIT with fellowship aid to develop their scholarly competence. They usually work under the supervision of MIT faculty members and use the facilities of the Institute.
- Postdoctoral and research fellows are not degree candidates. No services can be required of fellows by virtue of their appointment, and their stipends do not constitute payment of salary for services rendered to the Institute. Neither principal investigator status nor consulting privileges are available to persons holding appointments at this rank. Since fellows are not employees of the Institute, they do not participate in the MIT Retirement Plan or other staff benefits. Certain fellows are required to participate in either the Affiliate Health Program or the MIT Health Plan. (See [Section 7.4.3 Affiliate Health Program](#).)
- Funds for postdoctoral fellowships are provided from a variety of sources, including private donors, foundations, corporations, and government agencies such as the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. Because the terms and conditions of fellowships vary widely, each must be considered on an individual basis. If the terms of a specific fellowship do not preclude it, a fellow may concurrently hold a part-time appointment at the Institute.

Salary and Benefits for postdocs



- **2024 minimum postdoc salary: \$66,950**
- **Minimum salary is required for Associates and Fellows**
- **Maximum salary set at \$85,000 with exceptions considered by the VPR**
- **Benefits differ for Associates and Fellows**
 - Fellows are not eligible for employee health insurance, retirement, tuition subsidy, or pre-tax flexible spending accounts
 - Fellows can access some benefits (dental, vision, childcare subsidy) but without employee subsidy or tax savings; processes vary and are managed by VPR and HR
 - Fellows are eligible for Affiliate/SHIP health insurance – PI pays difference between Affiliate and Employee health insurance OOP for Fellows; as a student-centric plan, it is different from the employee plan

Equalizing Insurance Costs for Associates & Fellows

Objective: Fellow's out of pocket expense for premiums *should not* exceed an Associate's out of pocket expense

Health Benefits for Postdoctoral Fellows

We are committed to equalizing the cost of health insurance between postdoc fellows and associates, so that the premiums paid by fellows are not greater than what they would be paying if they were postdoctoral associates. At the time of the initial appointment, MIT administrative contacts conduct an evaluation, factoring in any health insurance coverage included in the fellowship. When the remaining cost to the fellow would exceed that of a postdoctoral associate, they arrange in advance for the faculty host to provide the difference between the cost to the individual for fellows versus associates. For each category of coverage, the current annual premium cost difference is indicated below. (Annual rates below are effective January 2017.)

Coverage Tier	Postdoc Associates MIT Traditional Health Plan	Postdoc Fellows MIT Affiliate Plan and Extended Insurance	Difference
Individual	\$2,388	\$4,296	-\$1,908
Individual and Spouse (or Spousal Equivalent)	\$5,748	\$7,272	-\$1,524
Individual and dependent	\$4,920	\$5,256	-\$336
Family	\$7,584	\$8,172	-\$588

New salary process



One minimum salary for all levels of experience, replaces the salary ladder



Adjustment to the minimum will be announced each fall and go into effect January 1



January 1, 2024, the new postdoc minimum salary/stipend set at \$66,950



All postdoc salaries below the minimum are adjusted on January 1; no additional adjustment is required at re-appointment



For budgeting purposes, assume same % increase as for other research staff.

Postdoc notice of non-renewal

Policies and Procedures 5.3.2*

Postdoctoral associates are appointed annually, with the start and end dates specified in the appointment letter. ***Postdocs shall be notified of non-renewal of the appointment*** in accordance with the following standards:

- 1. A three-month notice of non-renewal** shall be given if an appointment is for at least 50-percent time and **less than three years of continuous service.**
- 2. A six-month notice of non-renewal** shall be given if an appointment is for at least 50-percent time and **three or more years of continuous service.**

If it is necessary to terminate a postdoctoral associate ***before the end of their current appointment end date*** because of reduced funding, changes in the nature and scope of work, or for other operational reasons, an early termination may occur, but only in accordance with the standards listed above.

*Revised Oct 3 to clarify details about postdoctoral associate appointments, including notice period for non-renewal

Associates and Fellows

Associate = Employee

Fellow ≠ Employee

WHY??????

Distinction between Fellows and Associates stems from Regulations and Sponsor Policies

Fellowship Sponsors (Federal Agencies & Foundations)

*In accordance with [42 CFR Part 66](#), NIH provides stipends to NRSA fellows and trainees as a subsistence allowance to help defray living expenses during the research training experience. **NIH does not provide stipends as a condition of employment with either the Federal government or the sponsoring institution** (See NIH Grants Policy Statement [11.2.9.2](#) and [11.3.8.2](#)).*

[NIH Policies for NRSA Stipends, Compensation and Other Income NOT-OD-23-111](#)

IRS Regulations

Scholarships and Fellowship Grants

*A scholarship is generally an amount paid or allowed to, or for the benefit of, a student (whether an undergraduate or a graduate) at an educational institution to aid in the pursuit of his or her studies. **A fellowship grant is generally an amount paid for the benefit of an individual to aid in the pursuit of study or research.***

[Publication 970 \(2023\), Tax Benefits for Education](#)

Postdoc Fellows: a sponsor's perspective

- Support *independent* research with primary objective to further the education and research of the *individual*
- Research is performed independently and not under the supervision of MIT
- Fellow is not an employee hired by MIT to conduct research
- Fellow identifies a faculty sponsor or mentor
- Mentoring plan is usually required
- Fellow maintains final decision(s) regarding the direction of their research
- Faculty mentor provides guidance, advice and financial assistance

Primary objective is to support the development of the individual; research outcomes are secondary

Fellowship terms and conditions

- May be specified in the application instructions
- May be published in a general policy statement or document
- May be issued as a contract or letter
 - Addressed to the institution
 - Addressed to the fellow
- Occasionally there will be a contract or award notice to the institution **AND** a separate letter agreement with the individual

Ask the fellow to give you copies of EVERYTHING they have received from the sponsor

Fellowship stipend and allowances

Provide modest financial support

- Stipend level
 - May set an annual amount
 - May provide total funding amount and defer to the institution
 - a subsistence allowance to help defray living expenses during the research training experience
 - IRS refers to this income as "unearned" income
- Institutional allowance
 - Award usually defines what is/isn't allowable
 - Typically can be used for health insurance, travel, computer purchase, materials and supplies, (with faculty sponsor approval)
- Additional Support
 - Travel or moving costs to/from the institution (more common with foreign sponsors)
 - Additional support for family/dependents
 - Additional support for childcare

Restrictions or limitations related to accepting additional support or compensation

Expectations regarding level of effort, leave provisions, ability to transfer the award, etc.

MOST postdoctoral fellowships are not subject to employee benefit rate, vacation accrual, Facilities and Administration costs or fund transaction fees

Inconsistent use of Fellow title

Some programs refer to fellowships or may refer to the individual as a fellow but are inconsistent with MIT's definitions ...

- Hospitals and medical schools use fellow and fellowship to refer to MDs who are employees conducting specialized training
- Marie Sklodowska-Curie Fellowships – individuals are employed by the EU institution and are 'visiting' MIT
- NovoNordisk Foundation Fellows Program administered by the Foundation – modeled after Marie Sklodowska-Curie Fellowships
- MIT-GlaxoSmithKline Gertrude B. Elion Research Fellowship Program for Drug Discovery and Disease
- Faculty fellowships (e.g., Sloan Fellowships)

VPR and Provost must review and approve exceptions (review process managed by Postdoctoral Services)

The Changing Landscape

NIH ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE DIRECTOR WORKING GROUP ON RE-ENVISIONING NIH-SUPPORTED POSTDOCTORAL TRAINING

December 15, 2023

Report to the NIH
Advisory Committee
to the Director
(ACD)



THE UNION of
Postdocs and Academic Researchers

University of California Postdoctoral Researchers UAW Local
5810

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[nature](#) > [editorials](#) > article

EDITORIAL | 24 October 2023

Postdocs are pushing back against low pay and conditions — more institutions must take heed

Postdoctoral dissatisfaction about pay, job security and career progression cannot

UNIVERSITY NEWS

Brown prepared to voluntarily recognize postdoc union pending signature validation

BPLO filed petition with NLRB Dec. 28, three weeks days after announcing unionization plans

[nature](#) > [career feature](#) > article

CAREER FEATURE | 24 October 2023

Falling behind: postdocs in their thirties tire of putting life on hold

Temporary contracts, low salaries and cost-of-living hikes force many researchers to put off parenthood and other big decisions.



CAREER FEATURE | 09 October 2023

Postdoc career optimism rebounds after COVID in global *Nature* survey

Postdoctoral researchers still feel as though they are academia's drudge labourers, but have more confidence about job prospects in a post-pandemic world.



CPW-UAW 4100

THE UNION FOR POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS AT
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Better Working Conditions For Better Research

Columbia Postdoctoral Workers-UAW 4100

The Changing Landscape

Some fellowships now allow postdocs to be appointed as employees with benefits

- NASA Hubble Fellows – Institutions MUST give awardees the choice to be appointed as an employee or fellow; employee benefits rate may be charged to fellowship
- 51 Pegasi B Fellows, Heising-Simons Foundation – Follows the NASA Hubble program
- MIT NovoNordisk AI Fellows Program administered through MIT SoE (gift)

NIH NRSA/F32 awards

- [NIH Policies for NRSA Stipends, Compensation and Other Income](#) (April 2023)
 - While stipends are not provided as a condition of employment, this policy is not intended to discourage or otherwise prevent recipient institutions from hiring NRSA trainees and fellows as employees or providing them with benefits consistent with what the institution provides others at similar career stages.
- New Stipend rates: [NRSA Stipends, Tuition/Fees and Other Budgetary Levels Effective for Fiscal Year 2024](#)

Example: NASA Hubble

The Host Employment Policy

Host institutions must offer their NHFP Fellows the opportunity to be employees. Employee status is required to offer NHFP Fellows the same leave, vacation, retirement and health benefits (as applicable) given by these institutions to their postdoctoral fellows who are hired on grants or contracts as employees. Host institutions are also encouraged, but not required, to offer NHFP Fellows the option to be stipendiary fellows rather than employees.

Stipend and Benefits

The initial annual salary or stipend for a NHFP Fellow is comparable to that of other prize fellowships and is subject to annual review and adjustment. In addition, the NHFP Fellow will receive support for health insurance, relocation costs, travel, computing services, publications, and other direct research costs. **No additional stipend, salary, or other remuneration may be accepted** from any other appointment (such as teaching), fellowship, or similar grant during the period of the fellowship. Additional honorary named appointments intended to be linked with the title of "NHFP Hubble Fellow," "NHFP Sagan Fellow," or "NHFP Einstein Fellow" are similarly not allowed.

Augmenting NRSA Fellowship Stipends

NIH GRANTS POLICY STATEMENT

REVISED DECEMBER 2022. This document applies to all NIH grants and cooperative agreements for budget periods beginning on or after *October 1, 2022*.

You are here: [11 Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Awards](#) > [11.2 Individual Fellowships](#) > [11.2.10 Supplementation of Stipends, Compensation, and Other Income](#)

Search NIH Gr

11.2.10 Supplementation of Stipends, Compensation, and Other Income

11.2.10.1 Stipend Supplementation

Kirschstein-NRSA fellows receive **stipends** to defray living expenses. **Stipends** may be supplemented by an institution from non-Federal funds provided this supplementation is without any additional obligation for the fellow. An institution can determine the amount of stipend supplementation, if any, it will provide according to its own formally established policies governing stipend support. These policies must be consistently applied to all individuals in a similar status regardless of the source of funds. Federal funds may not be used for stipend supplementation unless specifically authorized under the terms of the program from which funds are derived. Under no circumstances may PHS funds be used for supplementation.

Augmenting NRSA Fellowship Stipends

NIH GRANTS POLICY STATEMENT

11.2.10.2 Compensation

NIH recognizes that Kirschstein-NRSA fellows may seek part-time employment incidental to their training program to offset further their expenses. Fellows and trainees may spend on average, an additional 25% of their time (e.g., 10 hours per week) in part time research, teaching, or clinical employment, so long as those activities do not interfere with, or lengthen, the duration of their NRSA training. Funds characterized as compensation may be paid to fellows only when there is an employer-employee relationship, the payments are for services rendered, and the situation otherwise meets the conditions for compensation of students as detailed in [Cost Considerations-Selected Items of Cost-Fringe Benefits / IHE Tuition/Tuition Remission](#) in IIA. In addition, compensation must be in accordance with organizational policies applied consistently to both federally and non-federally supported activities and must be supported by acceptable accounting records that reflect the employer-employee relationship. Under these conditions, the funds provided as compensation (salary, fringe benefits, and/or tuition remission) for services rendered, such as teaching or laboratory assistance, are not considered **stipend** supplementation; they are allowable charges to Federal grants, including PHS research grants. However, NIH expects that compensation from research grants will be for limited part-time employment apart from the normal full-time training activities.

Compensation may not be paid from a research grant that supports the same research that is part of the fellow's planned training experience as approved in the Kirschstein-NRSA individual fellowship application.

Stipend Supplementation & Compensation. Under no circumstances may the conditions of **stipend** supplementation or the services provided for compensation interfere with, detract from, or prolong the fellow's approved Kirschstein-NRSA training program. Fellowship sponsors must approve all instances of employment on research grants to verify that the circumstances will not detract from or prolong the approved training program.

NIH NRSA Post-Doctoral (F32) Fellows Funding Stipend Shortfalls

11.2.10 Supplementation of Stipends, Compensation, and Other Income.

NIH recognizes that Kirschstein-NRSA fellows (predoctoral or postdoctoral) may seek **part-time employment** incidental to their training program to offset further their expenses. Fellows and trainees may spend on average, an **additional 25% of their time (e.g., 10 hours per week) in part time research, teaching, or clinical employment**, so long as those activities do not interfere with, or lengthen, the duration of their NRSA training.

Compensation may **not be paid** from a research grant that supports the same research that is part of the fellow's planned training experience as approved in the Kirschstein-NRSA individual fellowship application.

Example: NIH Fellowship (year 0 salary)

Post-Doctoral F32 Fellow

Postdoctoral fellows can hold up to a 25% FTE concurrent postdoctoral associate position.

MIT's minimum = **\$66,950**

NIH Stipend = **\$61,008**

Postdoc Associate appointment (if less than 25%) to offset the difference

When do I have to route a postdoc fellowship proposal?

- Award will be made to MIT and the stipend paid to the fellow by the Institute (~65% of all externally-funded fellowships)
- Application requires an Institutional signature
- Allowance is paid to the Institute (even if the stipend is paid directly to the fellow)

Unsure? Contact your RAS Contract Administrator

EMBO Fellowships

EMBO Fellowships

European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO)

MIT receives a handful of EMBO fellowships each year. RAS signs the awards, and in order to do so, the following italicized text should be typed in above the signature line:

It is understood and agreed by the receiving institute that the results of the research involving the fellow will be made freely available in the scientific literature and will not be kept undisclosed, or their disclosure delayed, for non-scientific reasons, except that the receiving institution may delay publication and/or disclosure of research results if necessary to permit the preparation and filing of U.S. or foreign patent applications. Such delay will not exceed 90 days unless otherwise agreed between the parties.

EMBO pays the fellow directly and RAS is not involved with a proposal or account set up.

Fellowships with less than standard terms

- Banting Fellowships

- Research Development manages initial internal review
- No budget in KC as funds go to Fellow

- Rubicon Fellowships

- Jointly owned IP requirement
- PI confirmation of not overlap
- Clawback provision may require PI backing

- Internationally-funded Fellowships – other

- Funding fellow directly – *Routing of proposal likely not necessary*
- Funding managed at/by MIT – *Always requires routing and account*
- Consult/engage MIT Office of Postdoctoral Services - Overseen by Colleen Leslie and led by Ann Skoczenski for guidance and as a resource: postdocservices@mit.edu.

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowships

[Home](#) / [Grant and Contract Administration](#) / [International Activities](#) / Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowships

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowships

In order for MIT to host a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellow, the fellow's sending (home) institution must agree to the terms and conditions of MIT's [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Visitor Agreement Template \(MCVA\)](#).

If you have additional questions, please contact [Sharon Ray](#), Associate Director and [International Liaison in RAS](#).

At Proposal

- Confirm that the proposed fellow's home institution agrees to the required terms covered on the [external guidance](#). If requested, the MIT's [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Visitor Agreement Template \(MCVA\)](#) may also be provided.
- Host PI must complete and add the internal [Supplemental Proposal Routing Form Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions - International Outgoing Fellowships](#) to the proposal
- The CA will provide the [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Outgoing Host Letter of Commitment](#) for submission to the fellow's home institution at time of proposal.
- DLCs must agree to accept the currency risk from converting EUR to USD.

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowships

[Proposals, award, and post-award guidance](#) can be found on the RAS website.

Account setup

All Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowships must be set up as **parent accounts**. Once the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Visitor Agreement is finalized, set up a fellowship account with:

- **Payment basis:** Cost reimbursement
- **Payment method:** Advanced Payment Invoice
- **Applicable rate/type:** 0% FUNSN with no underrecovery
- **General comment:** "PI has identified whether there is potential research overlap in the supplemental MCVA routing form submitted with the proposal, and PI understands the need to keep actual overlap from occurring."
- **Indirect costs comment:** "VPR will need to take a one-time F&A draw down once the actual total is received and converted. That day's conversion rate can be used to calculate the amount taken for F&A. The DLC is responsible for working with VPF to have the F&A taken."

Documents

- [External guidance on Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowships at MIT](#)
- [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Outgoing Host Letter of Commitment Template](#)
- [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Visitor Agreement Template \(MCVA\)](#)
- [Supplemental Proposal Routing Form Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions - International Outgoing Fellowships](#)

[Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowships](#)

GlaxoSmithKline LLC Elion Fellowship Program

MIT–GSK *Gertrude B. Elion Research Fellowship Program for Drug Discovery and Disease*

NOTE 1: GSK Fellows will be appointed by MIT as *Post-Doc Associates*, and not as Post-Doc Fellows. Accordingly, for budgetary purposes, their salaries will be fully-loaded (Benefits/Vac/OH)

Questions



Who do I ask?????

RAS Contract Administrator

Laureen Horton, RAS Fellowship Liaison

Sharon Ray, RAS International Liaison

Ann Skoczenski, Director of Postdoctoral Services

Colleen Leslie, Asst. Provost for Research Administration

for appointment, salary and benefits questions, proposals for fellowships that aren't in direct response to a solicitation for a fellowship or those that have options related to charging benefits

Feedback

We are providing a **QR Code** for you to access the **RAP session feedback survey** via your phone or mobile device.



I will also provide the link https://mit.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bmHxOfUPVMf6JOm to access the form via the web and in a follow up email.