

## How to Secure a Postdoc Position

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*Many grad students, particularly in science and engineering fields, choose to work as postdoctoral fellows before pursuing permanent employment. The tips below were gathered from fellows in all stages of postdoctoral training, in several sectors (academia, nonprofits, and corporations), and in varied disciplines (life science, social science, and engineering). Hopefully these insights will help you locate, obtain, and fund a satisfying postdoctoral position.*

### **Benefits of Doing a Postdoc:**

- Gain more publications
- Buys you time
- Enhances CV (especially for faculty jobs)
- Open-ended learning
- Explore career options

### **Downsides:**

- Not as much freedom, salary, or respect as career positions
- Delays entry into permanent workforce

### **Focus:**

- Continue research similar to your graduate work
- Use postdoc position as springboard to slightly different area
- Acquire new skills by doing a postdoc position in an area unrelated to your graduate work

### **Location:**

- Consider leaving the UW to get a different perspective
- Move to a place where you'll meet lots of individuals who could be helpful to your future
- Try working in a different sector – corporate, nonprofit, government
- Be honest with yourself about where you'll be willing to live

### **Finding Positions:**

- Network, ask around
- Read professional association websites and newsletters
- Present at and attend conferences and meetings
- Advisers can give ideas and advocate for you
- Connect with people who give lectures at the UW
- Email departments or deans of interest, even if they don't have positions posted
- Approach individuals who are publishing interesting research in journals

## Timing:

- Begin networking now!
- Start looking about 8-12 months before you finish your PhD
- Depends on funding schedule
- For many grants, you have to apply before you've been a PhD a full year
- Never too late to start looking

## Standing Out:

- Craft an application that shows you are creative and productive
- Submit an abstract or two of projects you want to work on
- Consider mailing your application via FedEx (cover letter, CV, abstracts)
- Show what you can bring to the table, how you can further lines of investigation, how your skills match their projects, how you might bring a different perspective, etc
- Personalize and polish your materials before sending them
- Apply to at least 3 positions, or more than 10 if applying to competitive labs

## Assessing Lab Atmosphere:

- Figure out how your personality meshes with that of the PI
- Assess whether the PI is interested in your ideas/projects or just wants you to do his/her work
- Talk to students and postdocs in labs – take them to lunch
- Analyze their publication, presentation, and funding records (PubMed, NIH, etc)
- Inquire about authorship rules and assignments in the lab
- Ask other departments at the school/company about the lab's reputation

## Salary & Funding:

- Ranges widely (\$36K – \$98K)
- Very helpful to get your own funding
- Apply for postdoc and early career professional grants
- Have a well formulated “career development plan”

## Length of Postdoc Positions:

- Social science – usually 1-2 years
- Science – usually 3-6 years
- Sometimes universities have a 5 year cutoff

## Getting PhD Adviser On-board:

- Land a position, then adviser will see you have marketable skills and will let you graduate
- Thesis committee can also convince adviser to let you go

## Switching Between Industry & Academia:

- Engineering – industry postdoc is good for academia
- Social science – hard to move from industry to academia

## Mentor Responsibilities:

- Direction and leadership
- Networking and cheerleading
- Co-authoring (but not stealing first authorship)
- Let you do your own work and achieve your goals

## Offer Letter:

- Make sure it has great detail to reduce future surprises
- Expected responsibilities
- Evaluation methods – 6 mo, 12 mo written feedback

## Expectations:

- 1-2 publications per year
- 1 grant application per year
- Periodically re-evaluate if you're getting what you want out of your postdoc position

## Getting Teaching Experience While a Postdoc:

- Sabbatical replacements
- Just ask a department if you can teach
- Co-teach a class

## Miscellaneous:

- Try to work through problems with your PI
- Talk to significant others early
- Talk about your partner after the offer is made
- Gain transferable skills
- Watch current students as they apply for postdoc positions
- Watch current postdocs as they apply for jobs

## UW Resources:

- <http://depts.washington.edu/uwpa/>
- <http://depts.washington.edu/pdfrs/index.html>
- <http://www.lib.washington.edu/gfis/>
- <http://www.grad.washington.edu/fellow/FellAsst.htm>

## Other Resources – Many Disciplines:

- <http://gsasgrants.fas.harvard.edu/pdg.cgi>
- [http://www.sacnas.org/pdfs/sacnews/SACNAS%20NEWS\\_FA07.pdf](http://www.sacnas.org/pdfs/sacnews/SACNAS%20NEWS_FA07.pdf) – pg 22-23
- <http://web.mit.edu/career/www/infostats/respostdoc.html>
- <http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/3subject.htm>
- <http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/grpinst.htm>
- <http://www.socfell.fas.harvard.edu/>
- <http://see.orau.org/>
- <http://www.cos.com/>
- <http://www.cornell.edu/diversity/whatarewedoing/fellowships.cfm>
- [http://www.rackham.umich.edu/faculty\\_staff/sof/](http://www.rackham.umich.edu/faculty_staff/sof/)
- <http://www.theleadershipalliance.org>
- <http://www.rwjf.org/>
- <http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/>

## Other Resources – Science, Medicine, & Engineering:

- <http://jobsboard.biocareercenter.com/>
- <http://www.nationalacademies.org/grantprograms.html>
- <http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/funding>
- <http://grants.nih.gov/training/index.htm>
- [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/new\\_investigators/pathway\\_independence.htm](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/new_investigators/pathway_independence.htm)
- <http://www.gene.com/gene/research/postdoctoral/index.html>
- <http://www.hhwf.org/>
- <http://www.novartis.com/research/nibr/careers/postdoc.shtml>
- <http://bwfund.org>
- <http://www.lsrif.org/pages/welcome.htm>
- [http://www.lilly.com/careers/programs/post\\_doc/index.html](http://www.lilly.com/careers/programs/post_doc/index.html)
- <http://www.nigms.nih.gov/Research/>
- <http://millerinstitute.berkeley.edu/>
- <http://www.drcrf.org/NETCOMMUNITY/Page.aspx?pid=230&srcid=230>
- <http://www.wi.mit.edu/>
- <http://www.uncf.org/portal/seimerck/scholarshipsinternshipsfellowships/tabid/93/default.aspx>
- [http://www.biotechinstitute.org/programs/minority\\_fellows\\_program.html](http://www.biotechinstitute.org/programs/minority_fellows_program.html)
- <http://finweb.rit.edu/humanresources/employment/ffcep/>
- [http://www.pg.com/science/research\\_tech.shtml](http://www.pg.com/science/research_tech.shtml)

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