

# Guide to Postdoctoral Agreement

## General information

On April 16, 2019, the Executive Board of the University of Bern adopted new Postdoc Regulations. Section 8 of the Regulations states that, from August 1, 2019 a contractual agreement is required for every appointment of a postdoctoral researcher. The document serves several purposes:

Firstly, the Postdoc Agreement regulates those aspects of the employment position mentioned in the Postdoc Regulations, namely duties, objectives, supervision (Part A).

- The agreement also meets the requirements stipulated for a job description (also Part A).
- The document also serves as a formal instrument for the purpose of verifying the achievement of objectives, as provided for in the staff performance appraisal (SPA) (Parts B to G)
- Attached is a simple template for a potential or career interview that goes beyond the objectives of the current position (Part H).

Employment at postdoc level is very heterogeneous. It includes, for example, persons who are employed as an Early Postdoc by a Principal Investigator on a particular project, as well as persons who have obtained an Ambizione grant independently and who are ranked in the category of Senior Research Assistant and have no direct line supervisors (although the institute's management must confirm to the SNF the requisite support and integration).

The Postdoc Agreement should be useful for all categories of Postdocs (Early Postdoc, Advanced Postdoc, Senior Research Assistant) and in various scientific/academic settings. This agreement can be adapted to the specific situation as required, but includes the necessary minimum information that each Postdoc Agreement must clarify.

The Postdoc Agreement governs the supervision relationship as prescribed by the Postdoc Regulations. Primary supervision is usually carried out by the supervisor (who also carries out the SPA).

A note for Ambizione grantees of the SNF: These academics come to the University of Bern having obtained funding independently and must be supported by the institute's management (without any direct supervisor). The agreement should be concluded here by the contact person at the institute or the institute's management. Submission of the Postdoc Agreement can be adapted to this particular situation, as required.

## Notes on the individual sections

### *Part A: Postdoctoral Agreement*

This agreement must be concluded within six months of the start of employment.

On Protected Research Time (PRT): PRT constitutes at least half of a full-time workload. Companies and clinics providing permanent services in the medical and veterinary field (in accordance with University Ordinance Article 110) may set the PRT to at least 20%, provided they have taken over duties in the supply of services. These should be listed in the Postdoc Agreement.

On supervision (see Postdoc Regulations Article 8.3): Primary supervision is usually carried out by the supervisor, who is also responsible for the MAG. The secondary supervisor does not necessarily have to be employed at the University of Bern.

On the research project: This terminology is based on the Postdoc Regulations (Section 8.1). It is possible that the postdoctoral researcher will be involved in multiple research projects. One of these will usually be the main one. The information provided should describe the specific situation as succinctly and as precisely as possible.

On further duties: These tasks do not pertain to the research project directly. Even so, it is important to list the duties a person is intended to carry out and where he or she acquires academic qualifications, especially in the field of teaching (whereby teaching duties must be stated explicitly in the Postdoc Agreement, see Postdoc Regulations Section 8.1).

### ***Part B: Assessment of achievement of objectives***

Under Postdoc Regulations Section 8.2, the achievement of objectives must be evaluated on an annual basis and adjusted, if necessary. This review of objectives takes place as part of the MAG (see Section 9.1 of the Postdoc Regulations).

### ***Part C: Objectives agreed for the coming year***

Agreements on objectives are concluded for one year at a time (for the next 12 months).

On leadership / project organization: At the postdoc level, a wide range of opportunities is available for taking on project management roles. Objectives will relate to the specific situation at hand. In principle, every postdoctoral researcher must obtain experience in the research organization.

### ***Part E: Framework conditions and work situation***

Up to and including Part E, the secondary supervisor should certify that they have read the content of the Postdoc Agreement. The Results Sheet, in contrast, (Part F and Part G) concerns the supervisor and the employed researcher only.

### ***Parts F and G: Overall assessment and statement of the postdoctoral researcher***

This Results Sheet will be signed by the supervisor and the postdoctoral researcher only and will then be filed in the personnel file.

### ***Part H: Potential interview***

The purpose of the potential interview is to discuss jointly the candidate's suitability for a further academic career and any individual framework conditions.

The interval at which potential interviews are held should be both useful and practicable for all forms of postdoctoral studies. It is important to avoid situations in which an individual may work as an Advanced Postdoc for several years, for example, without ever having an interview with their supervisors about their future academic career. For this reason, even during long-term postdoc phases that do not involve switching to another employment category, a potential interview should take place every two years at the very least.

The Postdoc Regulations contain no specific rules regarding who should actually conduct the potential interviews.