



Policy Title	Policy on Postdoctoral Research Fellowship				
Scope of Application <i>(All persons to whom policy applies)</i>	All academic & Research staff. Post-Doctoral Fellows.				
Parties Consulted (Development) <i>(State the stakeholder group/s consulted during policy formulation/revision)</i>	Executive Deans, Academic Staff, HR and Finance				
Parties Consulted <i>(State the stakeholder group/s consulted during policy formulation/revision)</i>	Executive Deans, Academic Staff, HR and Finance				
Policy Owner	DVC: Research, Innovation, Commercialisation, and Internationalisation.				
Policy Implementer <i>(A person doing the implementation and monitoring)</i>	Directorate of Research				
<p>POLICY HISTORY <i>(To be Completed by Policy Owner)</i></p> <p>This policy was approved in 2015. Since its approval, the number of postdoctoral research fellows (PDRFs), also referred to as postdocs, at VUT has increased making it necessary to review the policy on PRDFs at VUT. The mechanism of appointment has been reviewed to include the steps to be taken in the recruitment and selection of a postdoc. In addition, the privileges and responsibilities; evaluation and reappointment of a postdoc and implementation of the policy and revision period have clearly been outlined in this document. This revised policy also considers postdocs who are attached to academic service departments other than faculties.</p>					
Policy Number	Resolution Number	Status	Implementation Date	Approving Authority	Next Review Date
<i>(Unique number assigned to each policy)</i>		<i>(New/Revised/No Status)</i>	<i>(Compulsory if 'New' or 'Revised')</i>		<i>(Date of which the committee approves revision proposal)</i>

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Vaal University of Technology (VUT) is developing and growing its research culture. The university seeks to improve on its research productivity and visibility. The postdoctoral research fellowship (PDRF) offers recent doctoral degree recipients a period in which to extend their education and professional training, which may serve as a path for further academic and professional development. In addition to deriving individual benefits, postdoctoral research fellows (postdocs) will make important contributions to the research and scholarly mission of the university.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the terms and conditions for the award of the fellowship, tenure activities and termination of PDRFs contracts at the VUT. In addition, this policy seeks to ensure accountability in the implementation and evaluation of the postdocs.

2. SCOPE

The PDRFs are normally awarded to individuals within five years of having achieved a doctoral degree. This policy will apply to all postdoctoral fellows appointed at VUT and their academic hosts, their host departments and faculties and relevant stakeholders.

The Research Directorate is charged with the responsibility of administering postdoctoral research fellowships and ensuring that their appointments, activities and terminations comply with this policy.

3. LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Policy should be aligned and contribute directly to the VUT Strategic Plan and take into consideration other approved policies: Research Funding Policy; Intellectual Property Right Policy; Research Ethics Policy; and Grants and Contracts Policy.

The policy is also aligned to the 2019 White Paper on Science, Technology and Innovation and the Department of Home Affairs Policy on Critical Skills.

4. DEFINITIONS

- **Department** refers to the academic department which has undertaken to host the PDRF.
- **Head of Department (HoD)** refers to the head of department.
- **Fellowship** is the grant of money or stipend to support the PDRF. Fellowships are provided from different sources.
- **Postdoctoral research fellow, herein referred to as postdoc**, is the person with a PhD awarded the fellowship to undertake research and/or research-related activities at VUT. Postdocs are individuals who must have achieved a doctoral degree within the last five years from a recognised institution of higher learning.
- **Conditions-of-award** refers to the conditions of the fellowship concerned.
- **Contract** is the agreement between the VUT and the PDRF, defining the relationship between the Director: Research, HoD and the PI on the one hand and the PDRF on the other, delineating the expectations of

each by the other.

- **PI** refers to the principal investigator or supervisor hosting the postdoc.

5. POLICY MANDATE

The aim of this policy is to ensure accountability and streamline the implementation and evaluation of the Postdoctoral Research Fellowships at VUT.

The objectives of this policy are:

- To provide an opportunity for experiential learning for PhD holders across the world through research, which may serve as a path for further academic and professional development.
- To provide the framework for the successful functioning postdocs.
- To promote and integrate knowledge, awareness, appreciation and skills for research with diverse populations.

6. RULES/ GUIDELINES

This section of the document outlines the applicability, mechanism of appointment, privileges and responsibilities of the postdocs.

6.1 Applicability

The following information applies to postdocs appointed at VUT.

6.2 Mechanism of Appointment

- 6.2.1 The call for submission of applications by eligible candidates will be made by the end of the first semester of an academic year. The call will be advertised on the university website and circulated amongst staff of the university.
- 6.2.2 All submitted applications will be consolidated by the Research Directorate and screened for suitability of the applicants. Submitted applications should include certified copies of all certificates, a CV and copies of research publications of the applicants.
- 6.2.3 The Research Directorate will conduct background checks on the applicant's qualifications and professional experience and publications and make recommendations to the selection committee.
- 6.2.4 Selection and recruitment of applicants must be done by a Postdoctoral Research Fellowships Selection Committee
- 6.2.5 Postdocs are held accountable to the terms of a standard contract. The institution, the faculty and the departments must provide equipment and resources necessary to enable the postdocs to carry out their research work effectively. These must be documented in the contract. The university, the faculty and the department must provide an environment where training and learning will take place and where ongoing mentorship/ supervision is ensured.
- 6.2.6 International postdocs will be expected to acquire a South African relevant permit for the period of their fellowship.

6.3 Privileges, responsibilities and benefits

- 6.3.1 Postdocs at VUT are NOT permanent employees of the university, they can therefore not qualify for any employee benefits such as membership of retirement fund, support for a medical aid scheme or any other employee benefits.
- 6.3.2 Postdocs will be given access to library, computing and other facilities in the university on the same basis as regular members of faculties and will be responsible for any charges associated with these privileges.
- 6.3.3 Postdocs may participate in departmental and faculty meetings at the invitation of the department or faculty.
- 6.3.4 Postdocs may use their association with VUT for the purpose of external applications for research funding, recognising that such funds must be administered by VUT and the use of such funds will be governed by VUT financial procedures. [Prior Approval is required]
- 6.3.5 The postdoc will play a critical role in enhancing the research culture through publications in DHET accredited journals; contributing to the development of research; facilitation research seminars/ workshops at department or faculty level; and assist with limited teaching and postgraduate research co-supervision.
- 6.3.6 Postdocs will publish all their research outputs (including creative works and patents) in the name of VUT.
- 6.3.7 Postdocs will be entitled to a yearly NON-TAXABLE stipend agreed by the Research Directorate and stated in the appointment letter/ contract.
- 6.3.8 Where a Postdoc does extra work, this is to be paid for at the university rate for casual work for workers with a PhD (the Human Resources Department current rate) and must not be paid by means of the **PDRF bursary system** but must be paid via the salary system. These payments are taxable in accordance with the prevailing tax legislation.¹

6.4 Expected outcomes of the postdoc

A postdoc who undertakes research will be expected to produce two (2) research output units as per DHET guideline. He/she will be expected to produce up to three (3) research output units in the second year. Where applicable, the postdoc can support with postgraduate student supervision and limited (10% of a postdoc time allocation) teaching.

6.5 Evaluation and reappointment of a postdoc

- 6.5.1 The Research Directorate will constitute a Postdoctoral Research Fellowships Selection Committee responsible for evaluating every postdoc at the end of his/her contract.
- 6.5.2 The Terms of Reference of the Committee will determine the membership and functions of this committee.
- 6.5.3 Fellowships will be renewed on an annual basis up to a maximum of two (2) years, based on performance and contributing to research, teaching and learning.

¹ If PDRFs are required to perform additional services but are not remunerated for those services, it can create the impression that the bursary, or a portion thereof, is in fact taxable remuneration for those services rather than a tax-exempt bursary.

- 6.5.4 At the end of each contract period, the postdoc shall complete an evaluation report and submit it to the Research Directorate. The Research Directorate shall evaluate the postdoc's performance based on the targets set out in the contract.
- 6.5.5 The renewal of a postdoc's contract will be done after evaluation and if he/she has performed satisfactorily per the terms of his/her old contract.
- 6.5.6 Postdocs who undertakes related activities with directorates or sessions of the universities other than faculties, centres and departments will be evaluated based on their key outputs (such as policies, reports or reviews they developed).

7. DEVIATION FROM THIS POLICY

Deviations from this policy must be approved by Senate.

8. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY AND REVISION PERIOD

- 8.1 Once the policy is approved by the Senate for implementation, the policy should go into effect and guide all activities relating to Postdocs. A progress report will be submitted to university management on the implementation of this policy.
- 8.2 This policy should be evaluated at the end of the 2nd year after its implementation and revisions should be made if recommended.
- 8.3 Key activities and their respective outcomes set out in this policy will be evaluated at the end of each year to evaluate progress made in implementing this policy.