

# How a Union Contract Improves the Postdoc Experience



	Before Contract	With Current Contract
Compensation	Recommended minimum pay was the outdated NIH minimum of \$47,484. In the decade preceding 2016, base pay was increased once, by \$62/month. Postdocs could request additional increases.	Guaranteed minimum pay for all Postdocs is at least \$50,004 per year (2019 NIH minimum) and increases with each year of experience. Postdocs paid above the scale will receive a guaranteed annual raise of at least 2% per year. The contract can be re-opened to bargain the salary scale if the NIH scale increases.
Transportation	Postdocs could purchase a U-Pass for \$50/month.	From 7/1/19 through at least 6/20/21, the U-Pass will be available to all Postdocs free of charge.
Dispute Resolution	The dispute resolution process depended on job title and the type of complaint. Certain disputes were pursued through the faculty code process for Research Associates, and a school-based process for Senior Fellows. Other complaints needed to be pursued through the appropriate office (EEOC, EHS, Benefits, UCIRO). Where policy was unclear or non-binding, UW admin was the final arbiter.	All claims that the contract has been violated can be pursued through a fair, transparent grievance procedure. This includes, where necessary, the right to appeal to a neutral third party arbitrator for resolution.
Non-Discrimination and Harassment	Postdocs could bring complaints about discrimination or harassment through the University Complaint Investigation and Resolution Office (UCIRO) per rights established in University Executive Order 3I. However, the vast majority of Postdocs did not report and most had little confidence in the UW processes. Postdocs did not have the right to a secondary mentor.	Postdocs have rights beyond UW Executive Order 3I to correct a hostile or discriminatory workplace environment. Postdocs can choose to raise complaints through whichever resolution process best supports their needs (the contractual grievance procedure, UCIRO investigation, or other federal/state offices); are entitled to peer union representation; and are entitled to interim measures to work free from discrimination during an investigation. Postdocs have the right to choose a secondary mentor. A new peer-led sexual harassment training helps address discrimination/harassment before it starts.
Layoff, Corrective Action, Dismissal	Postdocs were disciplined or dismissed without UW having to show just cause. Advance notice was suggested.	UW must prove just cause in order to take corrective action against or dismiss a Postdoc and must provide advance notice. Postdoc appointments cannot be involuntarily reduced or eliminated due to lack of funding within the first year of appointment. International Postdocs who face dismissal are entitled to visa assistance and financial support if travel to the U.S. is necessary for an arbitration hearing.

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Career Development	At the discretion of Postdocs' PIs, paid time may be used for career development activities. IDPs (Independent Development Plans) are required for NIH funded Postdocs.	All Postdocs have the right to develop an IDP, covering goals and expectations, self-assessments, and progress reviews. Postdocs have the right to serve as PIs on grants (with approval) and the right to use paid time for professional development activities.
Appointment Length and Workload	No minimum appointment length and no limits on the number of days or hours that a PI could demand Postdocs work.	Minimum one-year appointment (and re-appointment). Workload cannot exceed what is reasonably necessary to complete the project.
Family Leave, Sick Leave & Child Care	<p>Birth parents could be eligible to use paid sick leave (up to 90 calendar days) for parental leave. Non-birth parents were not eligible. Sick leave could not be used in cases of adoption.</p> <p>UW did not offer subsidized childcare to Postdocs.</p>	<p>Starting in 2020, Postdocs who worked 820 hours or more in the previous year can receive 12 weeks of paid family leave in a year through the new Washington State Paid Family and Medical Leave program. Paid leave can be used by a Postdoc of any gender within one year after the birth or adoption of a child, or to care for self or a family member who has a serious health condition. Pay equals a percentage of normal wages (up to \$1,000 per week).</p> <p>Postdocs also receive 12 paid sick days per year of appointment (up to 24 days in the second year and beyond) for personal illness, or for care of a child or family member.</p> <p>A new \$30,000 fund has been established to help offset the cost of childcare.</p>
Vacation & Other Leave	Postdocs could be eligible for up to 1 month paid time off, subject to supervisor approval and not tracked.	Postdocs are entitled to 21 paid vacation (work) days and 3 paid bereavement days per year, in addition to any unpaid leave. Postdocs are not required to work on public holidays and also have 1 paid personal holiday per year. Leave is tracked and transparent.
Workspace, Health and Safety	UW unilaterally determined and enforced health and safety standards. Training, access to workspace, equipment and facilities were at the discretion of the individual supervisor.	Postdocs have the right to workspace and materials necessary to complete their work, and can refuse to work in spaces that present an imminent danger to health and safety.
Political Action	No unified voice in political decision-making and action.	Postdocs can play an organized role in electing pro-science, pro-worker candidates and advocating for policy change.
Bargaining Power	UW had no obligation to bargain over terms/conditions of Postdoc employment, or solicit/accept input from Postdocs. Resources to help Postdocs advocate for change could be provided by the University.	Postdocs bargain as equals with UW. Postdocs can pay Union dues (1.44% of gross salary) to create independent resources for advocacy. In 2021, Postdoc successor contract negotiations will take place close to the same time as Academic Student Employees, increasing bargaining power for both.

NOTE: This document is a summary.

Please go to <http://www.uwpostdocsunited.org/current-bargaining-proposals/> for a complete list of articles and detailed information.

Email [uwpostdocsunited@gmail.com](mailto:uwpostdocsunited@gmail.com) with questions.