

## **Expectations for Postdocs and Postdoc Supervision/Mentoring in the Neutrino Division**

January 13, 2023

version 4.0

This document outlines the responsibilities and expectations for Neutrino Division postdocs and scientists who supervise and/or mentor them.

### **Section 1: Why does Fermilab have postdocs?**

The lab maintains a core group of postdocs to (1) train the next generation of physicists, (2) work together with our scientific staff to help execute the science mission of the lab, and (3) keep our scientists more deeply connected to the science we do at the lab. These three reasons inform how scientists in the Neutrino Division should perform their job as a postdoc supervisor.

### **Section 2: Who becomes a postdoc supervisor?**

Supervisor assignments are made by Division management, and we aim to eventually get to the level of one postdoc for each “research active” scientist. Preference for such supervisory roles will be given to early career scientists, in parallel to similar opportunities they would have at a University.

When hiring postdocs, the Division prefers to first decide who the supervisor will be and then be able to tell postdoc candidates at the interview stage who the supervisor of the successful candidate would be. Sometimes it is necessary to move away from this desired approach, but it will be used wherever it can be. Whatever the details of the process, it is the Division management’s responsibility to assign the supervisor.

### **Section 3: Deciding what a postdoc works on**

Decisions on what a postdoc will work on need to emerge from discussions between the supervisor and postdoc with the concurrence of Division management. The work should both serve the lab mission and be exciting to the postdoc (in some cases, compromise may be needed on both sides). A postdoc working on multiple projects with multiple supervisors is possible, but requires a more detailed plan and higher level of scrutiny from Division management.

### **Section 4: The first month**

When a postdoc first arrives at the lab, the supervisor has a number of duties to perform to onboard the new postdoc that includes greeting them at New Employee Orientation and completing a [first day checklist](#) with them, as well as going through the “How to get things done in Neutrino Division” list at the end of this document. Please also see the [New Employee Manager’s Guide](#) [1]. The new postdoc is assigned office space by Division management. Before the end of the new postdoc’s first month at the lab, the supervisor should arrange an initial meeting with the postdoc, Division management, and mentor team in which the postdoc presents their research plan. This plan should be regularly revisited and certainly examined at each annual mentor meeting (see next section).

Important information for getting things done in Neutrino Division:

Topic	Things to know
Administrative support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get to know your Admin support person! This will be your go-to person for all administrative questions and requests.</li> </ul>
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All business-related travel, <i>even if it is paid by another institution</i>, must have a Travel Authorization (TA) entered into the Fermilab travel system. Talk to your department's admin to initiate a TA and its approval process.</li> <li>• Travel requests to foreign countries must be completed and approved in the travel system at least 30 days before departure date</li> <li>• After travel, submit all receipts to your admin so that reimbursement can be issued</li> </ul>
Purchasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchasing items is done through your admin, via a "purchase requisition" form. Supervisors should provide an example of a correctly filled in purchase requisition.</li> </ul>
Trash collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cleaning crew will not empty bins in offices. You are responsible for emptying the trash can in your office. Please empty it into one of the larger bins by the elevators.</li> </ul>
Mail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A mailbox on your floor of Wilson Hall will be assigned to you. If you live onsite, please have personal mail delivered to the Village. Do not have personal mail/items delivered to Wilson Hall.</li> </ul>
End of Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the end of your term, please be sure to clean and remove ALL belongings. Anything left will be discarded.</li> </ul>

### Section 5: Postdoc mentoring

In addition to having a supervisor, each postdoc is also typically assigned two lab mentors and one university mentor by Division management. A complete [list of mentors](#) can be found on the Neutrino Division web page [2]. Suitable mentors are selected; they may be from areas other than neutrino physics in order to provide outside perspective. The role of the mentors is to help the postdoc in whatever way they reasonably can to ensure the postdoc is thriving and on track to secure their next position. Mentors do not replace the supervisor but augment the supervisor.

Supervisors are responsible for scheduling quarterly meetings for the postdoc and supervisor/mentor team. It is required that the first of these meetings take place in January of each year, and be attended by the entire team (postdoc, supervisor, and mentors). In addition,

the supervisors are responsible for scheduling three additional meetings (spaced such that they are roughly quarterly) for the postdoc and mentor team (*not* including the supervisor). It is up to the postdoc to decide whether or not to cancel these additional meetings (but they are encouraged not to!). At the annual mentors+supervisor meeting, the postdoc should give a “strategy presentation” summarizing their planned and actual research accomplishments and future career plans. The presentation should focus on the path to their next job. This is an opportunity to ensure that the postdoc is on a good career trajectory or to correct that trajectory if they are not. The formality (or informality) of the other three meetings with the mentors is up to the postdoc. Informal meetings can be helpful in talking through topics related to research path or career, but if the postdoc feels that more formal oversight will be helpful, they are welcome to prepare presentations and ask the mentors to provide feedback in that way. If the postdoc would like to invite the supervisor to one of the “mentors-only” meetings, they may do so, but by default, the supervisor is not invited (despite being responsible for scheduling the meetings).

### **Section 6: Recurring supervisory responsibilities**

It is a good idea for supervisors to establish (and work hard to maintain) a regular weekly meeting time in addition to whatever ad hoc meetings are needed with their postdoc(s). As a supervisor, you are also responsible for approving weekly time cards, scheduling the quarterly mentor meetings for your postdoc(s) starting in January, assisting the postdoc in their annual goal setting, and conducting an annual performance review each summer. Important dates are as follows:

- ~ Weekly: engage in regular meeting with postdoc
- ~ July: conduct annual performance evaluation
- ~ October: advise with goal setting and approve goals
- ~January: hold annual mentor+supervisor+postdoc meeting and set up 3 more mentor+postdoc meetings evenly spaced over the year (~April, ~July, ~October).

### **Section 7: Duration of a postdoc term in the Neutrino Division**

The expected postdoc residency in the Neutrino Division is nominally an initial 3 year term, with a 4th year renewal possible. A 5th year renewal is possible only under extraordinary circumstances and will require appropriate justification. A postdoc who becomes a parent by birth or adoption prior during their term will be granted an additional year of their appointment.

### **Section 8: Helping a postdoc find their next job**

A postdoc’s career is their responsibility and they should be encouraged to take charge of their own careers. However, because we strive to see our postdocs do well and because having a good track record of job placement ensures that we can continue to hire the best postdocs, the Division is committed to helping postdocs land their next position. As a postdoc supervisor, you should help the postdoc in their career aspirations by:

- 
- Involving their mentor team in the job search process
- Establishing a timeline for submission of job applications
- Reviewing application materials, both for academic and non-academic jobs (the

postdoc should be encouraged to supply these materials with ample time for review and iteration)

- Attending practice talks for job interviews and advising on appropriate non-neutrino personnel to invite to the practice talks
- Scheduling mock interview sessions

Supervisors should be aware that the lab has contacts with local 4-year colleges and may be able to line up part-time teaching for those postdocs wishing to build up their teaching experience.

It is expected that a supervisor will take a proactive role in helping their postdoc move on to their next position. Division management can additionally provide advice and support, including with placement in private sector positions.

### **Section 9: Performance evaluations: evaluating and being evaluated**

When conducting performance evaluations of postdocs, supervisors should treat the process just like any other performance evaluation - it should be conducted in a timely and individualized manner. In addition, supervisors will be evaluated on their postdoc supervision as part of their annual performance evaluation.

### **Section 10: Supervisor training**

Supervisors are required to complete a core set of Fermilab management training that should be a part of your ITNA [3]. It is your responsibility to make sure that your training is up to date. This training includes the following 7 classes:

- Behavioral Interviewing
- Managing Within the Law
- Diversity and Employment (1/2 day)
- Interaction Management (3 days)
- Fermilab Functions (3 days)
- Performance Review
- Setting Goals and Reviewing Results

### **References**

[1] <http://orientation.fnal.gov/managers-guide/>

[2] <http://neutrino.fnal.gov/files/Postdoc.pdf>

[3] <https://www-esh.fnal.gov/pls/cert/itp.html>