

How the Union Contract Improves the Postdoc Experience



	BEFORE THE CONTRACT	AFTER THE NEW CONTRACT
Salary	UC's recommended minimum salary was below the NIH minimum and some Postdocs made as little as \$18,000 per year. No guaranteed pay increases.	All Postdocs must be paid at least 2 steps higher than their experience level on the NIH NRSA scale ("NIH Plus 2 Steps") and many are paid above scale. Average salary has risen by more than \$10,000 (an increase of 25%). All Postdocs receive a yearly raise, many of which are 7% or more.
Personal Time Off (PTO), Sick Leave & Holidays	Postdocs received no fixed amount of PTO. Maximum was 20 days but only at the PI's discretion, and time off requests were frequently denied. One sick day per month; no roll over to new appointments. No guarantee of time off on UC holidays.	24 days PTO and 12 sick days available on the first day of appointment, and 13 holidays. Sick days roll over to new UC appointments if unused.
Parental/Maternity Leave	No guaranteed parental or family leave, maternity leave was only 60% of salary for five of six weeks.	Parental and family leave are guaranteed, and maternity leave is paid at 70% for five of six weeks. In addition, all Postdocs have four weeks of parental leave at full pay and can also use PTO and sick time for parental leave. If the Postdoc's funding source provides for longer leave, the Postdoc is entitled to it.
Medical, Dental & Vision Benefits	Many Fellows, Paid-Directs and LBL Affiliates did not receive employer-provided health insurance for themselves or dependents.	All Postdocs and dependents receive comprehensive UC-provided health benefits at greatly lower cost than nonunion UC faculty and staff plans. Medical and dental benefits have been improved including no-cost preventive care and contraception.
Appointment Security	No minimum appointment length.	Initial appointments must be at least one year and reappointments for a minimum of two years. Fellows and paid-directs receive appointment lengths to match the length of their fellowship funding.
Discipline & Dismissal/Layoffs	Postdocs could be disciplined or dismissed arbitrarily, or "at will." UC could lay off Postdocs at any time and for no reason without notice or compensation.	UC must prove "just cause" in order to discipline or dismiss Postdocs. Layoffs require very specific conditions and Postdocs must receive at least 30 days notice and pay before being laid off.

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Dispute Resolution & Non-Discrimination	No neutral, fair dispute resolution process. The only neutral recourse for discrimination or harassment claims was through costly and time-consuming state and federal agencies.	All workplace disputes (including discrimination/harassment) are resolvable by a fair and expedient grievance procedure and, ultimately, appeal to a neutral arbitrator. Postdocs who report a discrimination/harassment claim are protected to ensure their research and career progress are not derailed. State and federal agencies can also be utilized for claims.
Career Development/ Individual Development Plans (IDP)/Mentoring	No guaranteed performance evaluations or the right to create an IDP with your PI. Access to career development resources could be removed at any time.	All Postdocs have the right to participate in career development activities on paid time, create an IDP with their PI, and receive annual performance reviews. UC is obligated to fund career activities (such as travel to conferences) outlined in an IDP. Career development resources need to be available and continually improved.
Visa Processing	No protection against university delays in visa processing.	Postdocs must be compensated for any losses suffered due to delays in work authorization processing that are the employer's responsibility.
Reasonable Workload	There were no limits on the number of hours or days that a PI could demand that Postdocs work.	PIs can only require Postdocs to work what's reasonably necessary to complete the project.
Health & Safety	UC unilaterally set and enforced health and safety standards. Some Postdocs did not receive the proper health and safety training or equipment when requested.	Postdocs have the right to health and safety training, to the proper safety equipment, to refuse a hazardous assignment until it has been remedied or determined to be safe, and to access safe operating procedures and legally-required safety records for chemicals, substances and equipment.
Political Advocacy	No unified Postdoc voice in national policy making.	NIH NRSA Postdoc starting pay has increased by 28% since our first contract. UAW Local 5810 has played key roles in electing pro-science, pro-education candidates to Congress, has gathered thousands of petitions in support of increased science funding, and has advocated in Sacramento and Washington, DC for workers' rights, comprehensive immigration reform, and gender equity in academia.

Become a Member of The Postdoc Union! Since the union was formed, our strength has come from member support and involvement. Whether enforcing the rights listed above, developing critical resources for Postdocs (such as career development tools and visa/immigration support), or winning more rights in the future, our success is dependent on Postdocs joining in collective efforts. Want more information on how our union has made important improvements for Postdocs? Read the paper written by UAW 5810 members in the journal eLife, "How Postdocs benefit from building a union" (eLife 2014;3:e05614). Join us to improve working conditions and help realize your vision of a great UC Postdoc experience! When Postdocs stand together, we all achieve more!



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Note: This is only a summary. Please refer to the actual contract (<http://uaw5810.org/know-your-rights/contract>) for detailed information.

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