

# Postdoc Application Info Sheet

## Types of Postdoctoral Fellowships

**Duration:** Any type can range from 1-4 years

**Funding:** Salary varies by institution, runs higher in the US than UK. Highest at Ivy League SoF (e.g. Harvard ~ \$75,000+). Some include additional research funding (\$100-\$7000)

### Research (with 1-1 or lower teaching requirement)

#### 1. Open to any field for work on any topic

- e.g. **Society of Fellows (SoF) programs (Harvard, Princeton, Columbia, Dartmouth, USC)**
- National funding bodies (ACLS), sometimes in partnership with specific universities (Dartmouth Leslie Center, Haverford)**
- Interdisciplinary Centers (WUSTL Interdisciplinary Postdoc, UChicago Stevanovich, Northwestern Kaplan)**
- Programs requiring a designated mentor from a university dept (NYU Presidential, Cornell)**
- Junior Research Fellowships (JRFs) at Oxford and Cambridge – basically a SoF for each college at the university: there are MANY of these**

Eligibility:

- can be limited to just humanities or be open to all disciplines across the university
- sometimes have rotating fields (e.g. “For 2021, we are only/not accepting applications in XYZ disciplines”)

#### 2. Field-Specific

- e.g. **National Funding Bodies**
- Named postdoctoral positions (e.g. named in memoriam of a scholar)**
- Institutional relevance (Getty art history/curatorial postdocs, postdocs at a specific research library or collection)**

#### 3. Topic-Specific

- e.g. **Society of Fellows programs with an annual theme (Cornell, UPenn, UToronto)**
- Join a specific funded project (common in the UK/Europe)**

#### 4. Diversity-Focused

- e.g. **Michigan Diversity Postdocs, UCalifornia President’s Postdoc Program**
- can either be limited to candidates from underrepresented groups or focused on candidates who are committed to diversity in their research. Sometimes involves being part of diversity initiatives and programming. In few cases is explicitly designed to turn into a TT job.

## Teaching (with 2-2 or higher teaching requirement)

1. Teach in the school's Core curriculum (UChicago SoF, NYU, etc)

2. Teach in the Writing Program (Princeton, Harvard, Duke, Northeastern?)

### General Eligibility Notes:

-some recurring postdocs will only allow you to apply once (e.g. Princeton SoF)

-most have a time limit ("Must have earned PhD after X but before Y"). These windows can be narrow and only admit very recent PhDs. Others require the degree in hand before the application date and thus current students are ineligible.

-some give preference to or only allow people who have not previously held a postdoc

-some have visa limitations

-some require a letter from a faculty member at the host institution who has agreed to be your mentor

## When To Apply

### Timeline:

-North American research postdocs tend to be posted from the late summer through early winter (January) and teaching postdocs tend to be posted from the mid-fall through spring.

-interviews/shortlisting is roughly October-January, final notification Nov-March

-International postdocs seem to operate on a more year-round cycle, with major SoF-like positions (e.g. JRFs at Oxford and Cambridge) on a North American cycle and topic-specific postdocs appearing only a month or two before the project begins (and can often be off-cycle, with start dates other than September/October).

### General Advice:

-start collecting interesting postdocs asap, making a list of their deadlines from the previous year (available on their website, via the previous year's Postdoc wiki, see also my compiled list for common ones)

-ask for letters for postdocs (and jobs) in the late spring before the summer/fall you plan to apply

-typical applications call for 3-4 letters (Harvard requires 4)

-consider asking for a letter from somebody outside your discipline (who can thus speak to or at least signal your interdisciplinarity for interdisciplinary postdocs).

# How To Apply

## Finding Postdocs:

### 1. Recurring postdocs: Go directly to the society's, center's, institution's, funding body's, or postdoc's website

-many of these are easily searched on google or located via the Postdoc wiki:

[https://academicjobs.wikia.org/wiki/Humanities\\_and\\_Social\\_Sciences\\_Postdocs\\_2020-2021](https://academicjobs.wikia.org/wiki/Humanities_and_Social_Sciences_Postdocs_2020-2021)

### 2. Everything else: Sign up for email alerts from the same sites that aggregate job postings:

MLA Job List

The Chronicle Jobs

HigherEdJobs

Inside Higher Ed Jobs

HERC

Jobs.ac.uk

## General Advice:

-note that topic-specific postdocs are especially likely to circulate via social media directly from the people offering them. Keep updated and let your networks know you're looking for postdocs.

-learn the relevant options in Interfolio. Many applications that are not directly taking entire applications through Interfolio will still allow you to link your recommenders' letters from there (see "New Delivery → Confidential Upload") or send a set of letters to the search committee's email or snail mail address

-keep track of your recommendation letters at multiple stages, including "Sent automated email request" and "Letter uploaded". Note that some portals will not email recommenders until you submit the application – always check the letter situation in the portal asap, don't submit last-minute.

\*It helps to send automated requests in batches (e.g. all the portals open by early Sept, all the portals open by early Oct, etc) and send an email to your recommender listing the institutions they need to submit to.

## Typical Materials:

-cv

-writing samples: anywhere from 3500 words (Columbia) to your entire dissertation (Gonville & Caius, Cambridge). Typical is 1-3 articles or chapters.

-short abstract (150-200 words) of your project for non-specialists

-research proposal (750-2500+ words) detailing past/current/proposed research (NOT a dissertation abstract), and specific work to be undertaken during the postdoc

## Less Common Additional Materials:

-sample syllabus (tailored to the department you would teach in or the specific Core curriculum/writing program course you would be teaching)

-teaching statement (likely also tailored for same reasons)

-separate statement of research significance

-separate statements for experts and non-experts (weird and rare)

## Process of Evaluation

[info based partly on website Q&A answers, conversations with postdocs and hiring committees, and personal experience]

-Shortlist is typically top 10% or less (based on statistics from my own applications). Annually recurring postdocs see anywhere from several hundred to over a thousand applications.

-For interdisciplinary postdocs (e.g. SoF), materials are often vetted by both people close to your field and non-specialists from distant fields who are members of the society/search committee. Your materials may be shortlisted first by the department you would teach in (e.g. Columbia), with the best passed on to the society. OR they may be shortlisted by the society fellows and then passed on to field-specific experts (e.g. Oxbridge JRFs). OR all decisions may be handled by the society fellows, with the people closest to your field being your primary assessors and advocates.

-formal language around evaluation centers on: “scholarly record” (as evidenced by awards, publications, etc), “promise” (as evidenced by—I assume—the interest and plausibility of your proposed work during the postdoc as related to previous achievements), and “fit” (interdisciplinary work for a SoF, alignment with a center’s interests or specific theme)

## Writing the Research Statement/Personal Statement/Research Proposal

### Basic Requirements:

- 750-2000+ words, varies widely
- discusses past and/or current research and/or proposed work to be done during the fellowship
- should include basic job cover letter material: affiliation, defense date, awards, publications, etc (because there is typically no cover letter to submit)
- unlike a job ad, postdoc ads generally state explicitly what should be included in these documents

### Relationship to Other Job-Hunting Materials:

-postdoc applications are partway between being a grant application and a job letter. Like a grant application, it lays out specific work to be completed and resources to be used during the fellowship (why do you need this support now and why does it need to be at this institution?). Like a job letter, it conveys what you offer to the institution and why they might want you as a colleague/Fellow (especially if you’re also going to be teaching). Like both, it offers concrete proof of the quality of your work in the form of awards, publications, other fellowships or grants that have supported the project so far and connects your past work and success to future promise.

-strikes a difficult balance between an ambitious research program and demonstrating a practical awareness of the extent of revisions that will be necessary to turn a diss into a book. But erring on the side of overly ambitious

## **Elements to include (adjusted to meet specific requirements of the application):**

### **Statement of Who You Are and What You Do:**

- Affiliation, status (including fellow status if a dissertation completion fellow), and defense date
- Your field of study and general interests (flag cross-disciplinary ones if relevant)
- Publications

### **Concise, one-sentence statement of why you're applying/what you're proposing**

- e.g. "I'm applying to the SoF to ... revise my diss for publication and/or publish new articles and/or start a second research project, etc"

### **Description of dissertation/current research project**

- in present tense (shorter than a dedicated dissertation abstract to leave room for discussing revisions)
- similar to the brief abstract included in job letters, including, e.g.: research question, intervention, significance, overview of materials covered, an especially memorable example or detail, etc

### **Evidence that this project is already successful**

- already won X awards
- presented at X hard-to-get-into national conference
- resulted in X publications in Y top journals
- been recognized by X institutions
- been supported by X institutions (research libraries, archives, national funding bodies)

### **Year-by-year elaboration of the research you will undertake during the postdoc**

#### **If revising a diss, Description of specific revisions you will undertake to make it a book**

- e.g. "In the first year, I will ... add a chapter, engage with new theory, expand beyond a region/nation/cultural tradition, spin one chapter off into an article and replace it with a new one, consider new evidence, incorporate new archive (ideally at the institution you're applying to)"

- mention any resources at the institution you would draw on (people, centers, institutes, library collections, symposia, working groups) to accomplish this work

- if a long postdoc, mention when in timeline ("in fall of third year," "fall following the end of the postdoc," etc) you plan to develop and submit a book proposal for this project (signal you're planning to actually *finish* it, not just keep chipping away). Consider naming the press you'll submit to (and the journal, for in-progress publications) if appropriate.

#### **If a long postdoc (3 or more years, especially if non-US), describe additional work beyond the dissertation/first book project that you might begin, however preliminarily**

- additional articles (that you've already started writing, that are a spin-off from the diss, that you've presented on at a conference, that you've already agreed to write for an edited collection, etc)

-Second book project

-how it extends logically from your earlier work (you have a coherent—but not overly narrow—scholarly profile)

-general topic/key research question

-brief sketch of materials it would cover

-any resources at the institution you would draw on (people, centers, institutes, library collections, symposia, working groups) to accomplish this work

[Note: this is based on my experience of being asked about a second book project at every interview and seeing many postdoc ads that explicitly ask for you to detail research beyond your dissertation. Your mileage may vary.]

**Any postdoc-specific elements as called for by the ad**

-info on teaching (experience, interests, etc)

-commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity (and evidence of work done to that end)

-relevant research skills or topic expertise (for a topic-based or project-based postdoc)

**Close with a short summary of what you will have achieved by the fellowship's end and how it will set you up for career goals afterward**