



Some Postdocs and department administrators have raised questions recently about Postdocs in their 6th year and the ["Resolution of Eligibility Issues and Agreement on Scope of Bargaining Unit"](#) reached by the union and UW Administration in December, 2018. In particular, questions have arisen regarding the length of time permitted for Postdocs to be appointed or reappointed.

Previous University Policy: Before the formation of the Postdoc Union, University policy was that Postdocs employed as Research Associates and Senior Fellows - two of the most common titles for Postdocs - **"may not hold appointment for more than 6 years after receipt of terminal degree unless an exception has been approved by AHR"**. Cached web pages outlining policies can be found for [research associates](#) and [senior fellows](#).

Development of Current Agreement: When we filed our representation petition at PERC in October, 2017, our position was that Postdoc appointments should be defined based on [nationally accepted standards established](#) by the NIH, NSF and National Postdoc Association. Moreover, our position was that, in order to accommodate non-traditional pathways, Postdoc employment should not be arbitrarily restricted by limits on length of appointment or time since receipt of terminal degree.

Following certification of our bargaining unit, the University Administration took the position that Postdoc positions should not be provided to anyone whose PhD had been conferred more than 6 years ago, regardless of circumstances. The [final agreement](#) did away with that standard, set a standard appointment length of 5 years, and preserved the previous practice that allowed 6 years of Postdoc appointment. Specifically the agreement states that:

Postdoctoral Scholars shall be defined as individuals who [amongst other qualifications]:
Are appointed for a temporary and defined period not to exceed five (5) years, including Postdoctoral experiences(s) at other institutions, as determined by the University. Under extraordinary circumstances (e.g. family leave or personal illness), the University may grant an exception to this limit;

This agreement does therefore not alter previous university policy, nor does it infringe on the University's ability to grant exceptions to the 5 year standard. Moreover it does not in any way restrict the University's ability to appoint and/or transition employees, including active and past Postdocs, into positions not covered by bargaining unit agreement, such as acting instructor, acting assistant professor, visiting scientist, research scientist, etc. It also does not in any way infringe on the University's ability to appointment and/or transition employees into staff positions requiring a different visa status.

If you have additional questions about this agreement please reach out to uwpostdocsunited@gmail.com.