

## Frequently Asked Questions: Contract Ratification

June 5, 2019

Participation and engagement in the ratification process has been outstanding thus far, and we've received a number of questions that we wanted to memorialize. Don't see your question here? Send us an email at [uwpostdocsunited@gmail.com](mailto:uwpostdocsunited@gmail.com). You can also read the full text of the tentative agreement [here](#), and a summary of the tentative agreement [here](#).

### Ratification Vote Process

#### What am I voting to ratify?

All Postdocs are deciding whether to accept or reject the tentative agreement that the elected bargaining committee has negotiated with UW. If a majority of Postdocs voting vote "Yes" then the collective bargaining agreement will immediately be implemented. If a majority of Postdocs voting vote "No" then the terms we've negotiated will not go into effect. Instead, negotiations will re-open and we will need to bargain for a contract again.

#### What does the bargaining committee recommend? Why?

**The bargaining committee enthusiastically recommends a Yes vote.** We believe this is a strong contract, which meaningfully addresses a number of issues involving discrimination, harassment, and equity on campus, increases wages/benefits, and creates a much stronger and more democratic work environment for Postdocs. At the same time, we believe that there are a number of areas that we will need to continue to mobilize around and build power to improve. Significantly, we've negotiated a contract expiration in 2021 that provides another opportunity to bargain soon: this time at a time that more closely coincides with unionized Academic Student Employees, which will increase our collective power even further.

### Union Membership and Dues

#### When do I start paying dues?

Postdocs will have the opportunity to accept membership in the union and start paying dues only after the vote to ratify the contract has concluded. Dues are 1.44% of gross monthly pay and there is a one-time \$10 initiation fee for all new members.

#### Will all Postdocs be required to pay dues?

No. Postdocs will have the option of not paying dues, and all Postdocs will still be represented by the Union and will receive the benefits of the contract.

#### How do I pay dues?

Once you choose to join the union, dues will be automatically deducted from each paycheck.

## **Wages**

#### Will the negotiated wage increases be automatic?

**Yes.** Assuming ratification of the Tentative Agreement, wage increases will be effective August 1, 2019 as follows:

- If you are currently paid below the negotiated wage for your experience level (see Table 1 [here](#)), your wages will automatically be increased to the appropriate experience step on August 1st.
- If you are currently paid an amount equivalent to your experience step on the negotiated scale, your wages will automatically increase with experience on the one-year anniversary date of your appointment.
- If you are currently paid above your experience step on the negotiated wage scale, your wages will automatically increase by at least 2% on the one-year anniversary date of your appointment (or on August 1 if your anniversary date is between the date of ratification and August 1st).
- The UW is responsible for communicating these changes to departments. However, if you have any concerns, we encourage you to talk to your PI about your new salary.

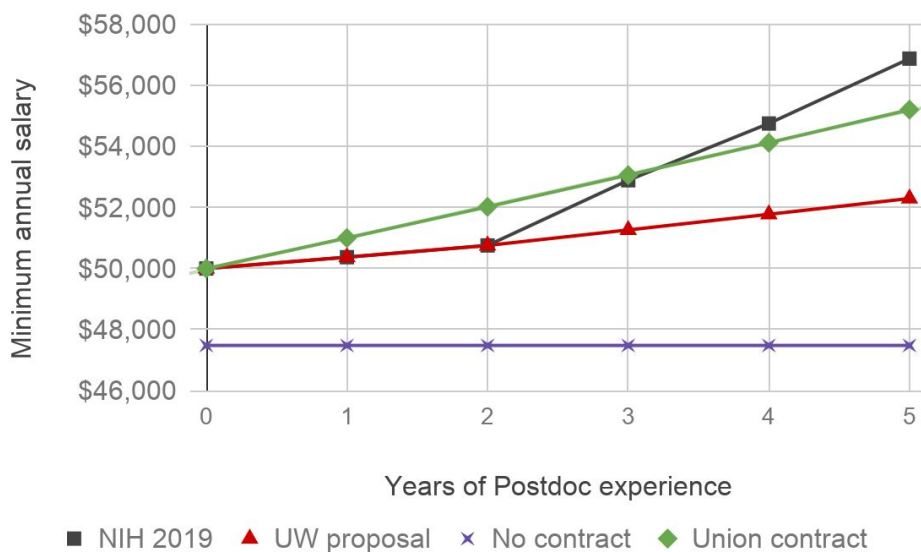
#### What if I don't receive an automatic wage increase?

**You are entitled to this wage increase.** Contact the union for assistance at [uwpostdocsunited@gmail.com](mailto:uwpostdocsunited@gmail.com) and we will help you make sure the contract is enforced.

#### Does my PI have discretion to accept or deny these wage increases?

**No.** Your PI cannot refuse to provide these wage increases, but they are able to provide additional increases if they choose.

#### How do our new minimum wages compare to the NIH wage scale?



The minimum annual salary for Postdocs with 0 years of experience matches the NIH (National Institutes of Health) scale. Our negotiated scale adds 2% for each year. Thus, the minimum annual salary is at least as high as the NIH 2019 recommendations for Postdocs with 0-3 years of experience.

#### How does the wage bargaining re-opener provision work?

If the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) stipend levels issued by the National Institutes of Health increase before October 16, 2020, we have the opportunity to demand to bargain with UW over incorporating those increases into this agreement. The University will be obligated to negotiate with us and try and reach agreement in good faith.

#### Why did the bargaining committee accept the University's offer to provide less than what the University of California Postdoc Union negotiated, whose minimum wages start at year 2 of the NIH scale?

Our decision to accept the University's final offer came with the understanding that we would have the ability to bargain again if the NIH/NRSA scale goes up before we negotiate our next contract. Moreover, we will be negotiating the entire contract again in October 2020, which is around the same time as bargaining occurs for the Academic Student Employees (grad student) contract. Collectively, this gives both groups greater overall power to demand equitable pay. We did not believe it would be in the best interests of Postdocs to refuse to accept the terms we'd already fought to win under these circumstances. We also recognized that UC Postdocs mobilized for more than one contract to achieve their current wage scale.

## **Rights and Protections**

#### Will the grievance procedure be stronger than whatever the UW offers currently?

**Yes.** The contractual grievance procedure provides survivor-centered practices that protect individual choice (including the option of using other processes for addressing complaints, such as the University's Internal Complaint and Investigation Office) and provide fair and equitable steps including interim measures that make it possible for Postdocs to keep working even when a complaint against a co-worker or supervisor is pending. Most importantly, the grievance procedure provides neutral third party arbitration for any disagreement, ensuring that the University can not be the final decision maker in the case of a dispute.

I believe my rights under the Collective Bargaining Agreement are being violated. What can I do about it?

Please contact us immediately at [uwpostdocsunited@gmail.com](mailto:uwpostdocsunited@gmail.com).

## Other Benefits

How will we ensure that Paid-Direct Postdocs get health insurance coverage?

The University agreed that any eligible Postdoc will be covered under the PEBB health insurance. Currently Paid Direct Postdocs have been deemed ineligible but we are determining how best to fix this problem so that this decision can be re-visited. If you are a Paid-Direct Postdoc who is not currently covered by PEBB, or you're interested in working with other Postdocs to fix this, please contact us at [pdhealthcare@uaw4121.org](mailto:pdhealthcare@uaw4121.org)

How will the \$30,000 in childcare funds get distributed?

That has not been determined as of this time, but any Postdoc who wishes to get involved in figuring out the distribution of funds is welcome to participate in our working group. Please email [uwpostdocsunited@gmail.com](mailto:uwpostdocsunited@gmail.com). The first distribution will be in December 2020.

When will I get a free U-Pass?

Assuming the contract is ratified, **the U-Pass will be available for free starting July 1, 2019.** You can find more details about how to sign up [here](#).

How does the new paid family and medical leave work?

Starting in 2020, Postdocs can receive up to 12 weeks of **paid family leave** in a year through the new [Washington State Paid Family and Medical Leave](#) program. Paid family leave can be used by new parents of any gender within one year after the birth or adoption of a child, or to care for a family member who has a serious health condition. Postdocs can also receive up to 12 weeks of **paid medical leave** for their own serious health condition, with the total of both paid family or paid medical leave capped at 18 weeks. To be eligible for paid family or medical leave, the Postdoc must have worked for at least 820 hours (approximately 21 full-time work weeks) in the year prior to requesting leave.

A Postdoc on paid family or medical leave will receive a weekly benefit that is a percentage of their normal pay. This benefit is funded by a new premium imposed on employers and

employees; Postdocs and UW both began paying premiums to fund the benefit in 2019. For someone making \$50,000 annually, premiums will be approximately \$10/month and the benefit wage per week while on leave will be about \$778. This new leave program is separate from paid vacation, sick days, and other leaves.

What if I am expecting a child before 2020 and was anticipating paid leave?

Please contact us immediately at [uwpostdocsunited@gmail.com](mailto:uwpostdocsunited@gmail.com) so we can help.