Termination Policy (PostDoc)

I. Purpose

This Policy defines conditions under which a postdoctoral researcher at Albert Einstein College of Medicine (“Einstein” or “College of Medicine”) can be terminated and the procedures required.

II. Scope

This Policy applies to postdoctoral researchers employed by Einstein.

III. Policy

III.A. Steps for Notification

When a postdoctoral researcher’s appointment is to be terminated, the principal investigator (PI) will take the following steps:

1. Notify the postdoctoral researcher at least two months in advance of the termination date
2. Provide the notification to the postdoctoral researcher both verbally and in written form
3. Hand deliver the written notice to the postdoctoral researcher
4. Continue to pay the postdoctoral researcher’s full stipend during the written notice period
5. Implement the notification in accordance with the steps outlined below

It should be noted that the requirement of two months' notice prior to termination defines the minimal acceptable notice. To allow the postdoctoral researcher to find a new position, PIs are urged to give postdoctoral researchers as much notice as possible.

All written communications between the PI and the postdoctoral researcher regarding any potential or actual termination will be provided by the PI to the departmental administrator, who will then forward copies to the following:

- Belfer Institute office
- Einstein Office of Academic Appointments
- Einstein Office of International Studies

III.B. Reasons for Termination

Reasons for termination of a postdoctoral appointment include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Completion of the postdoctoral appointment in accordance with the letter from the Director of the Belfer Institute.
A postdoctoral researcher’s appointment will end on the date indicated in the appointment or reappointment letter from the Director of the Belfer Institute unless it is renewed at the request of the PI. If the appointment will not be renewed, the PI will provide written notice to the postdoctoral researcher at least two months in advance of the end date.

2. Termination of the postdoctoral appointment before the end of the appointment letter from the Director of the Belfer Institute because of the expiration/termination of funding.

A postdoctoral researcher who will be terminated due to lack of funding (expiration of a grant or other financial support) will be notified in writing at least two months in advance by his or her PI, referencing the expiration date of the funding and the new termination date of the postdoctoral appointment. In cases where future funding for a postdoctoral researcher is uncertain due to a pending grant application, the PI should advise the postdoctoral researcher of the possibility of termination due to the lack of funding, the approximate date when approval or rejection of the grant is expected, and the possible termination date if funding is not obtained. If the funding decision remains uncertain, the PI will notify the postdoctoral researcher of the termination in writing at least two months in advance.

3. Termination of the postdoctoral appointment before the end of the appointment letter from the Director of the Belfer Institute due to performance of the postdoctoral researcher.
   a. Failure to discharge research responsibilities: A postdoctoral researcher may be terminated for failure to perform agreed upon research as summarized in the PI’s signed letter of offer and the postdoctoral researcher’s signed acceptance. The definition of a postdoctoral researcher’s failure to perform might include, but is not limited to, his or her lack of the technical skills needed to perform the research, poor attendance/reliability, or poor quality of work (such as presentation of inaccurate or incomplete data, not meeting agreed upon standards, and/or not adhering to timelines).
   b. Serious interpersonal conflict between the postdoctoral researcher and the PI and/or other members of the research team causing disruption to the research: Serious conflict that might disrupt a research project may include, but is not limited to, lack of communication between the postdoctoral researcher and the PI, resistance on the part of the postdoctoral researcher to authority, lack of teamwork with other members of the research team, poor interpersonal relationships/communication with other members of the team and/or disruptive behavior.

If a PI is not satisfied with the performance of a postdoctoral researcher, the PI may take steps to terminate the postdoctoral appointment as follows.

   a. If the PI does not believe that the postdoctoral researcher’s performance is likely to improve, then the PI may terminate the postdoctoral appointment. The PI must provide both oral and written notification of termination, not less than two months before the termination date. The postdoctoral fellow is required to continue to work during these two months. However, the PI can request that the postdoctoral fellow discontinue working in the lab, and can request the return of keys and/or discontinue other means of access to the lab. The postdoctoral fellow will continue to be paid a full salary during this period.
b. If the PI believes that the performance issues can improve, then it is recommended that the PI initiate a discussion with the postdoctoral researcher, detailing the problems or issues, stating his or her expectations and how they are not being met and warning him or her of possible termination. Such a discussion should include suggestions as to how these matters might be resolved and plans to improve the postdoctoral researcher’s performance.

It is recommended that all verbal discussions be followed up with a letter/email to the postdoctoral researcher detailing the discussed deficiencies, the suggested improvement plan, and the allowable time period (not less than two months) prior to termination. It is also recommended that at least one "progress" meeting take place within one month following the initial discussion to reevaluate the postdoctoral researcher’s performance. A total period of not less than two months is fair and reasonable for resolution of the problems. This period will serve as two months' notice of termination if postdoctoral performance does not improve.

4. Under a limited number of circumstances, postdoctoral researchers may be terminated under different advance notice and pay guidelines. These may include the following circumstances, which will be discussed with the Director of the Belfer Institute and/or the office of the Executive Dean:

   a. Lack of adherence to medical school policies and procedures: Einstein policies and procedures can be found here. Termination because of lack of adherence to these policies is subject to the terms of the individual policies and will be handled on a case-by-case basis.
   
   b. Criminal behavior or activities: In the case of illegal or criminal activity on the part of a postdoctoral researcher, termination will be handled on a case-by-case basis, and immediate dismissal may be warranted.

III.C. Termination PSF

Upon termination of a postdoctoral researcher, the departmental administrator will create a termination EPAF and route it to the following offices, in the order outlined below:

1. Einstein Office of Academic Appointments
2. Belfer Institute office
3. Einstein Budget office

If a termination EPAF has not already been processed, the departmental administrator will advise payroll in writing or by e-mail at least one week ahead of a postdoctoral researcher’s termination date.

IV. Definitions

None.

V. Effective Date

Effective as of: 12 November 2019
VI. Policy Management and Responsibilities

Einstein’s Belfer Institute for Advanced Biomedical Studies is the Responsible Office under this Policy. Einstein’s Executive Dean is the Responsible Executive for this Policy. Einstein’s Director of the Belfer Institute for Advanced Biomedical Studies is the Responsible Officer for the management of this Policy.

VII. Approved (or Revised)

[Signature]

Responsible Executive

[Date]

11/13/2019