General information about postdoctoral fellowships

Postdoctoral fellowships provide opportunities for acquiring further experience in a field of specialization or developing new areas of specialization, producing relevant publications, and working with new mentors.

In addition to universities where postdoctoral positions are often located, nonacademic institutions offer postdoctoral fellowships (e.g., American Council of Learned Societies, American Educational Research Association, Ford Foundation, National Science Foundation). Although there are more postdoctoral fellowships for social science projects in non-university settings (e.g., government or corporate-sponsored projects, nonprofit research institutes), especially in the fields that have applied research components, a number of research institutes or libraries offer postdoctoral positions for the humanities (e.g., Getty Research Institute, Library of Congress, Smithsonian Institution). However, it is hard to generalize about the differences between fellowships for social sciences and the humanities since interdisciplinary expectations have been emphasized for most of fellowships in these fields.

There are several kinds of postdoctoral fellowships offered by universities:

a) Humanities centers fellowships, the majority of which are funded by the Mellon Foundation. Most of these fellowships aim at bringing together interdisciplinary groups of scholars, from humanities, social sciences and humanistic social sciences, around a thematic foci changing from year to year (e.g., ‘Concepts of diaspora’ at Johns Hopkins for 2009-2010; ‘Cultures in transnational perspective’ at UCLA for 2010-2011; ‘Virtuality’ at U. Penn for 2010-2011).

b) Centers or institutes, where postdoctoral fellow is expected to study on a relevant subject (e.g., ‘Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture’ at Chicago; ‘Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women’ and ‘Political Theory Project’ at Brown; ‘Council of Middle East Studies at MacMillan Center’ at Yale; ‘Dispute Resolution Research Center’ at Northwestern.) They are either for one academic year or for two, sometimes with the possibility of renewing for another year.

c) There is a number of short-term fellowships for research in specific collections and archives with the duration of a month or a couple of months (e.g. at Saint Louis University fellowships offered by the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.)

Some postdoctoral fellowships are designed for recent PhDs, therefore applicants should apply in their final year of doctoral studies by considering that they could complete their degree before the fellowship officially begins. During the fellowship period, recent PhDs are usually expected to continue their own research and produce a book manuscript, monograph or major publication based on the dissertation research. Some fellowship opportunities invite applicants who have received their PhD degrees in the past two or three years, while others aim at senior scholars who have at least 5 to 10 years of experiences after the completion of their degree. These fellowships usually support fellows to expand the dissertation project or to begin a new project.

Services expected from fellows vary from teaching courses (sometimes general courses sometimes courses relevant to the specialty) to participating in the academic life of the center, institute or department (seminars, organizing annual conferences, etc.). Sometimes the fellows are expected to mentor students, organize a conference, run a research workshop, or give a presentation based on the fellows’ current research.
Although you can apply directly for most postdoctoral fellowships, some require nomination of the applicant by a sponsoring professor or department in the host institution where postdoctoral position will be held. It is advisable to begin contacting relevant people in the host institution some time before the deadline.

Although most of the fellowships offer stipends or salaries, a few fellowships offered by some centers or institutes are non-stipendiary, but offer housing, working space, library access, financial support for research activities, secretarial assistance, etc. (e.g. Institute of European Studies at UC Berkeley, Remarque Institute at NYU). While some fellowships are open to applicants of any nationality, some are restricted to U.S. citizens and permanent residents, and some are intended for underrepresented groups and minority scholars.

**How to find postdoctoral fellowships**

Mina Rees Library provides access to “Foundation Directory Online” and “Foundation Grants to Individuals Online”, two databases that you can search for scholarships, fellowships, grants, awards, and other financial support. These two sources are accessible only in library. Users must ask reference librarian to log them in.

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at CUNY offers access to “Community of Science” (COS) database. [http://www.cos.com/rfcuny.shtml](http://www.cos.com/rfcuny.shtml)

You can consult online fellowship databases maintained by universities. Some of these online databases may include both doctoral and postdoctoral fellowship information.

- Harvard University (Graduate School of Arts and Sciences) - [http://gsasgrants.fas.harvard.edu/pdg.cgi](http://gsasgrants.fas.harvard.edu/pdg.cgi)
- Columbia University (Graduate School of Arts and Sciences) - [http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gsas/sub/finaid/cstudents/database/](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gsas/sub/finaid/cstudents/database/)
- Cornell University (Graduate School) - [http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/?p=132](http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/?p=132)
- UCLA (Graduate Division) - [http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/grpinst.htm](http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/grpinst.htm)
- University of Chicago (Office of Graduate Affairs) provides a list of links to some institutions that have fellowship databases - [http://grad-affairs.uchicago.edu/programs/fellowships.shtml](http://grad-affairs.uchicago.edu/programs/fellowships.shtml)
- University of Notre Dame (Graduate School) - [http://www.grad.nd.edu/gfd/](http://www.grad.nd.edu/gfd/)

There is also a number of free, online database for scholarships and fellowships.

- Fastweb: [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)
- College Board: [http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_ss/welcome.jsp](http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_ss/welcome.jsp)

There are also several online fellowship lists presenting concise information about postdoctoral positions.

- Boston University (Office of the Provost) - [http://www.bu.edu/bufellow/outside_bu.htm](http://www.bu.edu/bufellow/outside_bu.htm)
- UC-Berkeley (Office of Sponsored Projects) - [http://www.spo.berkeley.edu/Fund/hpostdoc.html](http://www.spo.berkeley.edu/Fund/hpostdoc.html)
- The University of Texas at Austin (College of Liberal Arts) - [http://www.utexas.edu/cola/grant_services/fellowships/](http://www.utexas.edu/cola/grant_services/fellowships/)

Some universities provide information on grants and fellowships for graduate students in the form of a blog. University of Chicago - Division of Humanities hosts one, with a search option, as well
as different categories under which fellowships are organized, such as: citizenship restrictions, dissertation research, dissertation write-up, theme fellowships, travel grants, etc.  
http://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/studentgrantsfellowships/

Professional associations also provide information about fellowship opportunities in their bulletins, usually in sections including job lists.

One of the main problems that occurs in these different websites is that the information is not always kept up-to-date. It is the best to check out the fellowship website.

**Suggestions for the application process**

The deadline varies considerably. Although databases aim to provide up-to-date information about selection criteria for fellowships, it would be better to visit the website of the institution or program that grants the fellowship, or even to contact with the administrator responsible for the fellowship program. Contacting the program would be also helpful in order to gain further insights on preparing a strong application.

Usually the application includes a resume, a writing sample (i.e. dissertation chapter), letters of recommendation, a cover letter or personal statement, a statement of research plans for the duration of the fellowship, proposal for the course/s to be taught.

It is advisable that you formulate your project in multiple ways so that your proposal would match the subject of different fellowships. There is a lot of information that is not accessible in fellowship announcements, but available through informal interactions. Talking to faculty and colleagues who have had relevant experiences would help strengthen your application.

Harvard University provides a useful, comprehensive guide to postdoctoral fellowships:  
http://www.gsas.harvard.edu/current_students/the_harvard_guide_to_postdoctoral_fellowships.php