

# Faculty of Graduate Studies Postdoctoral Handbook 2017-2018

July 21, 2017

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## A Welcome from Dr. Fahim Quadir, Interim Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies & AVP, Graduate



It is both a pleasure and an honour to welcome you to York University, an institution which has not only garnered a reputation as one of Canada's most socially **engaged** universities but is also widely recognized for its leadership in research **across a broad range of Faculties** from the School of Arts, Media, Performance & Design to the Lassonde School of Engineering. The second largest university in Ontario and third largest in Canada, York's growing cohort of more than 180 postdoctoral scholars represents a dynamic and diverse research community. My colleagues and I strongly believe that you will find York to be a vibrant intellectual ecosystem in which those who crave a challenge will thrive.

Our commitment to supporting your success is manifested in the Faculty of Graduate Studies' wide offering of services, including but by no means limited to the guide to postdoctoral affairs at York, which we hope will prove to be useful for you during your time at this wonderful university. Please read through these materials carefully and consult our [webpage](#) devoted to postdoctoral affairs in order to discover the breadth of facilities and activities that can help to enrich your postdoctoral experience. I encourage you to take advantage of the many research-related resources at York, namely our network of 25 intersectional Organized Research Units, including the Dahdaleh Institute for Global Health Research and Sensorium, The Centre for Digital Arts and Technology, The Centre for Refugee Studies. These centres can be invaluable in expanding and enriching your scholarly networks and access to activities which are aligned with your specific research interests.

Postdoctoral fellows strengthen the research orientation of York University by championing innovative new ideas and challenging conventional wisdom. We are delighted that you have chosen York as the destination for the next step of your academic journey. Please accept my warmest welcome and sincere wishes for a thoroughly rewarding postdoctoral experience.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fahim Quadir'.

Fahim Quadir, PhD

Interim Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Associate Vice-President, Graduate

[gradstudies.yorku.ca](http://gradstudies.yorku.ca)

## Postdoctoral Services at FGS – Overview

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FGS offers a suite of services and supports to all members of its postdoctoral community: the aim of these services is to enrich the postdoctoral experience at York University, and to support postdoctoral scholars both during their time at York, and in their pursuit of future professional success.

The Postdoctoral Services mandate includes:

- The provision of orientation support to new postdocs, such as:
  - Organization of the annual orientation session and welcome event
  - One-on-one orientation, including campus tours
  - Assistance with securing a York library card and e-resources
  - Guidance regarding acquiring a YUCard
  - Assistance with securing UHIP, if applicable
  - Advising regarding health benefits, if applicable
  
- Support for international postdocs, such as:
  - General advice about orientation to York's campus and Toronto
  - General information about relocation to Canada
  - Guidance regarding securing a Social Insurance Number
  - Guidance regarding OHIP (Ontario Health Insurance Plan) and UHIP (University Health Insurance Plan)
  - Assistance with submission of the Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA)-Exempt Compliance Forms to Citizenship & Immigration Canada and payment of compliance fee for postdocs applying for work permits
  
- Research services and supports, such as:
  - Provision of information about funding opportunities of interest to postdocs
  - Support for postdoctoral fellows applying for postdoctoral fellowships OR research funding to be held at York
    - This support includes:
      - Review of and feedback on application materials (if submitted in advance)
      - Assistance with liaising with agencies regarding guidelines, and assistance interpreting guidelines
      - Assistance with submitting application materials to Office of Research Services, if applicable

- Professional development resources, such as:
  - Delivery or coordination of professional development workshops
  - Provide resources and information on professional and career development opportunities, events and workshops
  - Coordinate with external and internal organizations and individuals to provide career development opportunities for postdocs
  
- Communications to postdocs at York University
  - New postdoc orientation, welcome package, and networking events
  - Postdoctoral e-newsletter and mailing list
  - Distribution of notices about campus events and funding opportunities
  - Maintenance and updates to the main postdoctoral website at <http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/postdoctoral-fellows/>
  
- Advising on Budgeting for, Hiring & Supervising Postdocs
  - Creation of tools and templates for use by researchers seeking to budget for and hire new postdocs
  - Liaising with researchers and other members of the York community (payroll, Faculty Relations, etc.) regarding questions about hiring and entitlements
  - Advising for researchers on best practices for budgeting, hiring and supervision

Connect with the Postdoctoral Services Coordinator, Kim McIntyre:

Email: [kimmcint@yorku.ca](mailto:kimmcint@yorku.ca)

Web: <http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/postdoctoral-fellows/>

In person (by appointment): 230Y York Lanes  
Faculty of Graduate Studies  
York Lanes, Keele Campus

# Understanding Postdoctoral Studies at York

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## Senate Policy on Postdoctoral Researchers

On April 27, 2017 the University Senate approved a [Policy on Postdoctoral Researchers at York University](#) based on a recommendation of its Academic Policy, Planning and Research Committee. The policy covers all postdoctoral researchers at York University and is part of the University's commitment to develop postdoctoral scholarship and training at its campuses.

This Policy, approved by the Senate, the highest academic governance body at the University, creates a shared understanding of the value of postdocs at the university, terms of reference for their roles, as well as the university's obligation to postdoctoral scholars as part of our research community.

## Types of Postdocs at York

Postdoctoral researchers at York University are early-career researchers working under the general supervision of a faculty member. Research conducted by postdocs makes an important contribution to York's research community, and enables the postdoctoral fellow to deepen and diversify professional development, and improve qualifications for a more permanent faculty position in research and/or teaching and/or in a related career path outside the academy.

Postdoctoral researchers at York are categorized as either Postdoctoral Fellows (PDFs) or Postdoctoral Visitors (PDVs). The categories depend on where the fellowship was created or originated. If the fellowship is offered by any body external to York, the incumbent is categorized as a PDF even in cases where funds are administered by York University. If the fellowship is created by a researcher or unit at York University and paid for through university funds of any type, the incumbent is a PDV.

### Postdoctoral Fellows:

- hold an external fellowship offered by agencies or other non-York sources such as NSERC, SSHRC, CIHR, etc.;
- typically apply for such fellowships in their own name (rather than in that of their supervisor)
- are not York University employees;
- are supervised by York faculty members;
- are not unionized;
- are able to teach through applying for CUPE postings or CUPE exemptions only;
- at the discretion of the supervisor, may have access to benefits; and
- may or may not have their salary topped up by York University research funds.

### Postdoctoral Visitors:

- hold fellowships created at York University that are funded by monies administered by the university (e.g. grants held by faculty members);
- are York University employees;

- are supervised by York faculty members;
- are unionized and are members of the York University Faculty Association, and are subject to the [provisions of the YUFA Collective Agreement](#);
- are able to teach up to a maximum of 1.0 courses per year;
- have access to benefits and leaves as described in the [YUFA Collective Agreement](#); and
- do not hold any form of postdoctoral fellowship or funding offered by any external agency.

## Appointment Letters

**If you are a Postdoctoral visitor who is hired by a faculty member and funded through that faculty member's own funds**, you will receive an appointment letter before you begin your fellowship, which must be signed by the Dean of the Faculty in which the Postdoctoral fellowship will be held, and by you as the postdoctoral fellow accepting the terms of the appointment.

- Appointment letters set out in writing the terms of the appointment, as well as detailing expectations and commitments of both the postdoc and the supervising faculty member. Faculty members must contact the Dean's Office of their Faculty to work with them to prepare this letter. For more information on Postdoctoral Visitor appointments, see the [YUFA Collective Agreement](#). Postdoctoral Visitors and supervisors can find additional information about [salary, benefit and leave entitlements](#) on the FGS website.

**If you are a Postdoctoral Fellow paid with funds from outside of York**, typically you will receive a letter that outlines the terms of the fellowship and includes an Intellectual Property (IP) agreement. This letter will also be prepared for immigration purposes in the case of a postdoctoral fellow coming from a foreign country.

- Your job description is generally the proposal which you submitted to the agency that now funds your postdoctoral work. As a complement to this, it is recommended that you meet with your postdoctoral supervisor at the outset of the fellowship to discuss goals, timelines and expectations for both parties.
- You are required to have an Intellectual Property Agreement between you and your supervisor that conforms to York University regulations on Intellectual Property before the start date of each fellowship.

## Benefits

Health benefits are available to Postdoctoral Fellows as follows:

### a. Ontario Health Insurance Plan

All Ontario residents are required to have basic medical coverage through [OHIP](#) (the Ontario Health Insurance Plan). International Postdoctoral Fellows must apply for coverage directly from OHIP upon arrival in Ontario. Please note that there is a three-calendar-month waiting period prior to enrollment with OHIP. During the waiting period, we encourage Postdoctoral Fellows to arrange for coverage through [UHIP](#) which is offered by Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada. York International, the office at York University that provides guidance and service to International Visitors, can advise and [assist with regard to health insurance](#).

### b. Health Benefits

**i) Postdoctoral Fellows receiving earnings from York.** Those who are in receipt of earnings paid by York (postdoctoral visitors - PDVs) are entitled to benefits and vacation and other types of leave. More information on benefits and other entitlements, can be found in the [YUFA collective agreement](#) and on the [FGS postdoc website](#).

For additional questions about benefits, please contact the Pension & Benefits Office at [askpb@yorku.ca](mailto:askpb@yorku.ca).

**ii) Postdoctoral Fellows receiving earnings from outside of York.** Postdoctoral Fellows who receive funding directly from an organization/agency other than York (postdoctoral fellows) do not typically receive health benefits from the university.

Postdoctoral fellows who are ineligible for extended health benefits are encouraged to make private arrangements for benefit plans and insurance coverage.

## Information Specific to International Postdocs

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York University welcomes many international postdoctoral visitors each year. Our international postdoctoral community plays a vital role in York's ongoing goal of internationalizing research and building strong global research networks and collaborations.

### Before applying for Your Work Permit:

Starting on February 21, 2015, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) implemented a series of changes to the way in which Work Permits for foreign academic visitors and postdoctoral researchers are issued. Under the new requirements, Canadian universities must submit an Offer of Employment to A Foreign National Exempt from a Labour Market Impact Assessment form, and pay a \$230 compliance fee for every foreign national invited. As of November 2015, this Offer of Employment must be submitted via CIC's Employer Portal. To complete this step, supervisors should contact their Dean's Office for more information and/or contact the [Postdoctoral Services Coordinator](#) for guidance and support with this process.

1. After the Offer of Employment to A Foreign National Exempt from a Labour Market Impact Assessment form has been submitted to CIC via the Employer Portal and the compliance fee has been paid, the supervisor must provide the offer of employment ID number to the postdoctoral fellow. The fellow will need to include this ID number on the work permit application form.
2. The postdoctoral fellow should ensure that they have received a copy of the fee receipt itself, in addition to the employment offer ID number.

### Upon arrival:

All Ontario residents are required to have basic medical coverage through [OHIP \(the Ontario Health Insurance Plan\)](#).

1. Postdoctoral Fellows must apply for coverage directly from OHIP upon arrival in Ontario. Please note that there is a three-calendar-month waiting period prior to enrollment with OHIP.
  - During the waiting period, we encourage Postdoctoral Fellows to arrange for coverage through [UHIP](#) which is offered by Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada.
  - [York International](#), the office at York that provides guidance and service to International Visitors, can advise and [assist with regard to health insurance](#).
  - It is recommended that you bring your passport and letter of offer with you to York International upon arrival to discuss health insurance.
2. For general questions about postdoctoral affairs and resources on campus (including access to email and library services), please contact the [Postdoctoral Services Coordinator](#).

3. The office of [York International](#) at York University can assist in general with orientation to Toronto and to life on York's campus for those coming from abroad.
4. The Faculty of Graduate Studies website also contains valuable information about [life in Toronto](#) and [support services for international scholars](#).

## During Your Fellowship

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### Annual Orientation Session & Welcome Reception

Each September, the Faculty of Graduate Studies organizes and hosts a two-part **orientation and welcome day** for all York postdoctoral fellows.

This two-part event provides postdocs with important information, celebrates the important contributions postdocs make to York and beyond, and allows invaluable opportunities for networking.

- **Orientation Session**

The orientation session is led by the Postdoctoral Services Coordinator, and is open to all postdoctoral fellows who started their postdoctoral position since September of the previous year. At this session, all new postdocs will receive:

- an orientation package including information about campus resources,
- a copy of the Postdoctoral Handbook,
- details about processes, procedures and resources for postdocs at York, a chance to ask any questions about postdoctoral affairs at York

**\*NB: for postdocs starting their appointments at a time other than the Fall, please make an appointment with the Postdoctoral Services Coordinator and she will provide you with an orientation package. You are encouraged to come to the Orientation & Welcome Event happening during the first September of your fellowship.**

- **Welcome Reception**

The annual welcome reception is an opportunity for York's postdocs to meet each other, and to meet and network with research leaders on campus from across disciplines.

Information about these events is available from the [Postdoctoral Services Coordinator](#).

## Professional Development

### Workshops & Related Programming

There are a range of resources on campus that can help you develop and enrich your professional skills, whether those are related to teaching or research, or other skills which are useful and desirable in both academic and non-academic professional contexts.

- The Faculty of Graduate Studies coordinates the [Graduate & Postdoctoral Professional Skills](#) (GPPS) program, which is designed for both postdoctoral fellows and graduate students. The program offers skills development workshops and sessions designed based on input and feedback from the communities they serve. Please consult the [Graduate & Postdoctoral Professional Skills](#) website on a regular basis for workshops/sessions applicable to you.
- [Mitacs Step Workshops](#) are free workshops taught by professionals and are structured around cultivating and improving important professional skills.
- Resources and workshops related to teaching are listed on the website of [York's Teaching Commons](#).
- York University Libraries (YUL) hosts the Learning Commons, which offers regular academic [support services and workshops](#).
- [The Career Centre](#) offers [resources and workshops](#) related to the job search and professional development.
- Professional development events and opportunities will also be listed in the monthly Postdoctoral Fellows edition of the **FGSnews** newsletter, which distributes information about funding, events, and opportunities of interest to our postdoctoral community. (If you do not receive this newsletter and would like to be added to the distribution list, please contact the [Postdoctoral Services Coordinator](#).)
- York's [research centres and institutes](#) offer workshops, seminar series, and other opportunities for professional development.
- Connect with your department and graduate programs affiliated with your areas of research to learn about professional development opportunities and events at the local level.

### Postdoctoral Newsletter

At the beginning of each month, FGS sends out an e-newsletter to all postdocs on campus titled **"FGSnews: Your monthly guide to all things postdoc at YorkU."**

This newsletter lists:

- Important information and news relating to postdoctoral affairs at York
- News about upcoming events of interest to postdocs, including
  - research events
  - professional development events
  - social events

- Information about upcoming internal and external funding opportunities of potential interest to postdocs

To be added to the recipient list for the postdoctoral edition of FGSNews, please email the [Postdoctoral Services Coordinator](#).

[Archived editions of the postdoctoral FGSNews](#) are also available.

## Research

Postdoctoral fellows are among the most active researchers at universities, being typically dedicated primarily to research as a focus (though postdoctoral research may be complemented and informed by teaching).

Postdoctoral scholars are also at an important early juncture in their academic careers. They make immense contributions to collaborative research projects, or conduct and lead research projects of their own design, at a time when they have surpassed the parameters of their doctoral research and have begun an independent research career. The Faculty of Graduate Studies recognizes the importance of research support during this critical career stage, and offers the following information that will help you build research networks on campus, connect with other researchers working in areas related to yours, and seek and secure funding for your research.

### Research Centres and Institutes at York

- York's [Research Centres and Institutes](#) can be valuable nodes for connecting with research communities and activities focused on specific research areas.
- You may wish to connect with one of these centres and explore the possibility of non-stipendiary affiliation with the centre, if your research aligns with its mandate. This would mean being named as a research fellow officially linked with the centre, and benefiting from the interdisciplinary research communities and vibrant intellectual environments which ORUs foster. This could be a way of finding community around your particular research interests. To learn more, please visit the website of the centre of interest, or email the centre director or coordinator for more information.

### Strategic Research Plan

As a critical part of York's research culture, postdoctoral scholars are encouraged to familiarize themselves with York's [Strategic Research Plan](#), the document which officially articulates the institution's research goals, commitments and priorities. It can be especially helpful to be familiar with this document when writing grant applications, as it helps you to comment on how your research aligns with the broader research culture at the university.

## Office of Research Services

York's Office of Research Services offers centralized support and services to all researchers at York. This office helps facilitate the submission of applications for research funding, administers funds when they are awarded, and houses the research ethics review process. Visit the [researcher support centre](#) to access essential information on how to identify funding sources, obtain funding, spend it appropriately, and report your expenses.

In particular, this webpage contains a useful list of funding opportunities, including those offered by external funding agencies and those offered by York itself.

## Research Ethics

York University is committed to the highest standards of integrity in research. All projects involving the use of [Human Subjects](#), [Animals](#) and [Biohazardous Materials](#) are subject to review by the appropriate University committee. York has formulated policies for the conduct of research involving all three of these areas. Please visit the [Research Ethics](#) page of the [York Research](#) website to review these policies and to find important information about ethics review processes for research projects conducted at York.

## Research Services Available through the Postdoctoral Services Coordinator

Postdoctoral Fellows at York who are seeking or applying for research funding are supported in these activities by the designated services of the Postdoctoral Services Coordinator. Please contact [the Coordinator](#) as early as possible if you intend to apply for research funding during your postdoctoral studies.

The Postdoctoral Services Coordinator can offer the following research supports and services to postdoctoral fellows:

- Advice on funding opportunities appropriate to you
- Advice on agency guidelines and support with interpreting requirements and liaising with agency staff if clarification is needed
- Review of application materials, including the provision of feedback
- Assistance with garnering the necessary institutional signatures
- Assistance with completing the Office of Research Services checklist
- Assistance with liaising with Office of Research Services staff
- Facilitation of the submission of the application and checklist to the Office of Research Services
- Support with negotiating technical aspects of online funding application platforms
- Maintenance of a list of [funding opportunities](#) on the Faculty of Graduate Studies postdoctoral fellows' website.

## Procedure for Submitting Grant Applications as a Postdoc at York

Please note that if a signature is required from an authorized representative at York within an application OR if institutional approval is required by the agency as a part of the submission process, all research grant applications must be submitted to the Office of Research Services in hardcopy by no later than noon on the day of the deadline, and significantly earlier if a signature (e.g. that of the Director of Research Services) is required in the application. The copy of the application must be accompanied with a signed, completed copy of the Office of Research Services Checklist. The [Postdoctoral Services Coordinator](#) can assist with this submission process.

## Innovation York

[Innovation York](#) is the innovation office for York University. The office provides services to faculty members, trainees, students, industry, and the community in five service units: agreements, industry liaison, knowledge mobilization, commercialization, and entrepreneurship. Innovation York's goal is to facilitate and maximize the commercial, economic, and social impacts of research and innovation, and to create a culture of engaged scholarship and experiential learning.

## Knowledge Mobilization (KMb) Unit

York University is an award-winning leader in [Knowledge Mobilization \(KMb\)](#) in Canada and internationally. KMb is a suite of activities that enhances the two-way connection between researchers and research users. The KMb Unit employs dedicated knowledge brokers to connect research and people for social innovation. It is dedicated to knowledge brokering & partnership support, training & capacity building, and supporting research grants and research event planning to maximize the impact of research. York's Knowledge Mobilization Unit received the Knowledge Economy Network Best Practice Award from the European-based Knowledge Economy Network (KEN) in 2012.

The KMb Unit at York University is a service unit that:

- Builds a culture of KMb
- Fosters collaboration
- Supports co-production of knowledge/research
- Connects policy and practice relevant research to decision-makers
- Develops and delivers tools for KMb

## Links and Resources

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### [Faculty of Graduate Studies - Postdoctoral Services & Supports](#)

- The Faculty at York which houses both the administration of graduate programs and research, as well postdoctoral services and supports.

### [Canadian Association of Postdoctoral Scholars](#)

- A Canadian committee of postdoctoral scholars and representatives who meet regularly (and virtually) to discuss issues arising across the country relevant to postdocs. This website provides news, information and resources relevant to Canadian postdoc, and publishes job ads.

### [Canadian Association of Postdoctoral Administrators](#)

- A Canadian organization of administrators and staff who support and promote postdoctoral affairs at institutions, and an authoritative source for news, data and information related to postdoctoral issues in Canada.

### [National Postdoctoral Association](#)

- A U.S.-based, member-driven nonprofit organization that provides a national voice for postdoctoral scholars. The website provides some useful professionalization resources.

### [University Affairs](#)

- Leading publication on Canadian higher education featuring current opinions and news about the state of university affairs, as well as a top source for academic job postings.

### [York International](#)

- York International, under the direction of the Associate Vice-President International, is available to assist all of York's international visiting scholars with their transition to York, Toronto, and Canada.

### [York's Strategic Research Plan, Office of the Vice-President, Research & Innovation](#)

- This document developed by the Office of the VPRI describes and defines York's areas of existing strength in research, and goals for areas of strategic growth in research strength for a five year period from 2013-2018.

PDF of SRP: <http://srp.info.yorku.ca/files/2013/04/13-061-SRP-full-Brochure.pdf>

### [York's University Academic Plan, University Secretariat](#)

- This document, developed and approved by senate with input from across the university, focuses on the implementation of strategic initiatives, analyzing the challenges that have arisen as well as emerging opportunities for York's growth.

[Pension & Benefits](#) - *For PDVs (postdocs funded by internal funds)*

- Pension & Benefits at York provides information regarding the university's pension and benefits provider.