

# naturejobs

**THE CAREERS  
MAGAZINE FOR  
SCIENTISTS**

**T**he Association of American Medical Colleges last month approved a document that, if it becomes more widely adopted, could revolutionize postdoctoral training. The association's Compact Between Postdoctoral Appointees and Their Mentors ([www.aamc.org/postdoccompact](http://www.aamc.org/postdoccompact)) is powerful because it gives both parties clear responsibilities and sets clear expectations for each side.

It tells postdocs to take primary responsibility for their career development. It states that their research project should be developed with their mentor, and that this should have clearly defined goals and timelines, all of which, ideally, should be agreed at the time the postdoc appointment is made. It asks postdocs to follow good research practices, to adhere to ethical standards and to treat their colleagues with respect. It also challenges them to assume more responsibility as their project progresses and puts the onus on them to request formal performance reviews. And, finally, it charges them to seek professional development activities outside the lab, both in terms of scientific and career development.

On the flip side, mentors are instructed to recognize that postdoctoral fellowships are a training period — not an opportunity to obtain and exploit inexpensive labour. Mentors, too, should establish timelines for research as well as career development goals with their fellows, the compact says. They should base their relationship with fellows on mutual trust and respect. And they should ensure that postdocs have the opportunity to obtain the skills they need — whether on or off the bench.

These guidelines, although challenging, seem to be mutually beneficial. But the compact ups the ante for mentors by asking them to help postdocs explore career options outside academia and to commit to helping their mentees succeed on whatever path they choose. If both postdocs and mentors sign up to this compact it will require a lot of work and commitment from both sides. But it could also help end many of the complaints that each side has about postdoctoral training arrangements.

**Paul Smaglik, *Naturejobs* editor**

**Editor:** Paul Smaglik  
**Assistant Editor:** Gene Russo

**European Head Office, London**  
The Macmillan Building,  
4 Crinan Street,  
London N1 9XW, UK  
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7843 4961  
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7843 4996  
e-mail: [naturejobs@nature.com](mailto:naturejobs@nature.com)

**European Sales Manager:**  
Andy Douglas (4975)  
e-mail: [a.douglas@nature.com](mailto:a.douglas@nature.com)  
**Business Development Manager:**  
Amelie Pequignot (4974)  
e-mail: [a.pequignot@nature.com](mailto:a.pequignot@nature.com)

**Natureevents:**  
Claudia Paulsen Young (+44 (0) 20 7014 4015)  
e-mail: [c.paulsenyoung@nature.com](mailto:c.paulsenyoung@nature.com)  
**France/Switzerland/Belgium:**  
Muriel Lestringuez (4994)

**UK/Ireland/Italy/RoW:**  
Loredana Milanese (4944)  
Nils Moeller (4953)  
**Scandinavia/Spain/Portugal:**  
Evelina Rubio-Morgan (4973)  
**Germany/Austria/The Netherlands:**  
Reya Silao (4970)  
**Online Job Postings:**  
Matthew Ward (+44 (0) 20 7014 4059)

**European Satellite Office**  
**Germany:** Patrick Phelan  
Tel: +49 89 54 90 57 11  
Fax: +49 89 54 90 57 20  
e-mail: [p.phelan@nature.com](mailto:p.phelan@nature.com)

**Advertising Production Manager:**  
Stephen Russell  
To send materials use London address above.  
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7843 4816  
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7843 4996  
e-mail: [naturejobs@nature.com](mailto:naturejobs@nature.com)

**Naturejobs web development:** Tom Hancock  
**Naturejobs online production:**  
Catherine Alexander

**US Head Office, New York**  
75 Varick Street, 9th Floor,  
New York, NY 10013-1917  
Tel: +1 800 989 7718  
Fax: +1 800 989 7103  
e-mail: [naturejobs@natureny.com](mailto:naturejobs@natureny.com)

**US Sales Manager:** Peter Bless

**Japan Head Office, Tokyo**  
Chiyoda Building, 2-37 Ichigayatamachi,  
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 162-0843  
Tel: +81 3 3267 8751  
Fax: +81 3 3267 8746

**Asia-Pacific Sales Manager:**  
Ayako Watanabe  
e-mail: [a.watanabe@natureasia.com](mailto:a.watanabe@natureasia.com)