

# Changing from Postdoctoral Fellow to Postdoctoral Associate

## Overview

A postdoctoral associate is an employee of the Institute, most often paid from a sponsored research grant. A postdoctoral fellow is not an employee of MIT and is most often the recipient of a named fellowship. **When the appointment type changes, this also changes eligibility for benefits; possible deduction of taxes; and eligibility for certain visa statuses.** To better understand why and how the positions are different, review the websites listed at the end of this document. Your [Postdoc Key Contact](#) will be a valuable resource throughout this process, and an in-person discussion is recommended.

**You will have important action steps to complete.** Read through all the steps carefully in advance. Most steps can only be completed once your change in appointment has been processed. Your Postdoc Key Contact can confirm this date with you. (As of your appointment effective date you are eligible to enroll in benefits, but occasionally there is a brief delay as the system updates.)

Every effort will be made to keep this information up to date, but in the case of any discrepancies, MIT Human Resources information takes precedence.

[**Note to DLC administrators- Late (retroactive) appointment changes** have additional ramifications. For assistance on a late appointment change, [email VPF's HR/Payroll team](#) or call 617-253-4255. For questions on how this impacts benefits, contact Mandy Chan, Senior Benefits Analyst in Human Resources; tel. 617-258-6215, or by email: [mchann@mit.edu](mailto:mchann@mit.edu).]

## Changes in MIT Benefits (including, but not limited to, health plans, vacation, dental, 401k)

Review the Human Resources Employee Benefits [website](#) for complete information about all employee benefits, including rates and details on [eligibility](#). New employees enroll in benefits through the Atlas website, however, those changing from postdoctoral fellow to postdoctoral associate follow different procedures. Once the new appointment is in the system and benefits enrollment is complete, the benefits profile can be viewed in Atlas. Sometimes it takes a few days for the system to fully update. (Note: Employees must be appointed at 50% or more to be eligible for these benefits.)

### Health Insurance

(1) Postdoctoral Associates who are appointed for at least 3 months are eligible for 3 MIT health plans: MIT Traditional, MIT Choice Health, or MIT High Deductible plans. These plans are administered through Blue Cross Blue Shield. Postdoctoral Associates who will enroll in an MIT

plan should review the summary of benefits for each plan, as well as the rates, to determine the plan that will best fit their needs: <http://hr.mit.edu/benefits/health/plans>.

To sign up for the one of these health plans, complete the **MIT Health Plans Enrollment/Change Form**. The Benefits Office must receive your completed, signed form **within 31 days** of the commencement of your postdoctoral associate appointment to avoid any gap in coverage. Submit the form to Mandy Chan in NE49-5000, or by email: [mchann@mit.edu](mailto:mchann@mit.edu). (In part 2, select “New Hire/Newly Eligible” and enter the effective the date of your postdoctoral associate appointment or the first day of the following month.) You and MIT share the cost of your health plan. You pay your portion through deductions from your MIT pay each pay period.

**(2) Outside plans:** If you already have a **non-MIT** health insurance plan (for example, you are on your spouse’s plan), you could continue that plan. (Note that coverage under an MIT plan is an employee benefit and the rates reflect an MIT subsidy.) If you choose not to continue that plan, be sure to contact your plan provider. For any questions, contact Mandy Chan (tel. 617-258-6215, or by email: [mchann@mit.edu](mailto:mchann@mit.edu)).

### **Dental Insurance**

**(1) If you were participating in MIT’s Group Delta Premier Plan as a postdoctoral fellow, you may elect to continue participation** at a subsidized rate. Refer to the instructions in #1 above under Health Insurance (second paragraph), and complete the Dental Plan section of the same form. Your cost will be deducted on a monthly basis through Payroll deduction. If you choose not to continue dental coverage, notify Mandy Chan.

**(2) If you were not already participating in MIT’s Group Delta Dental Premier Plan as a postdoctoral fellow, you may elect to enroll within 31 days** of the commencement of your postdoctoral fellow appointment. To do so, complete the **MIT Health Plans Enrollment/Change Form**. In part 2, select “New Hire/Newly Eligible” and enter the effective the date of your postdoctoral associate appointment or the first day of the following month. The Benefits Office must receive your completed, signed form **within 31 days** of the commencement of your postdoctoral associate appointment. Submit the form to Mandy Chan in NE49-5000, or by email: [mchann@mit.edu](mailto:mchann@mit.edu). You pay your portion through deductions from your MIT pay each pay period. Note: your appointment must be for 3 months or longer to be eligible to enroll in dental.

### **Vision Insurance**

**Postdoctoral associates and fellows are eligible for Vision Insurance at the same rates but are billed differently.** If you were enrolled in Vision Insurance as a postdoctoral fellow, you may elect to continue it. Refer to the instructions in #1 above under Health Insurance (second paragraph), and complete the Vision Plan section of the same form. You pay your portion through deductions from your MIT pay each pay period.

## **Vacation Accrual and Time Off Provisions**

Review the [summary of postdoc time off benefits](#), which includes important information related to time off on time off for holidays, vacation, sickness, childbirth, and parenting. Postdoctoral associates who hold 1 year or longer appointments will accrue vacation time in the amount of 1.25 days per month during their first year at MIT, and 1.67 days per month during each subsequent year at MIT. Vacation should be entered in the SRS Vacation tracker in Atlas (Home > Time and Vacation Entry > My SRS Vacation Tracker) on a monthly basis. Continue to discuss plans in advance with your supervisor, and speak with your Postdoc Key Contact about recording vacation time and questions related to time off.

## **Sick Time**

Monthly paid employees are required to report sick time (including time used for medical appointments) in Atlas, per Massachusetts law. More information is available here: <https://hr.mit.edu/benefits/time-off/sick>

## **Retirement**

**MIT Supplemental 401(k) Plan** – As a postdoctoral associate, you will be eligible for a supplemental 401k through Fidelity investments. MIT will match up to 5% of your pay in contributions to the 401(k) Plan. See details about the 401(k) plan, how to enroll, and timing at <https://hr.mit.edu/benefits/401k>.

**MIT Pension Plan** – Postdoctoral Associates may be eligible for the employee pension plan. There is a minimum appointment period in order to be vested in the plan. For more details, please consult <http://hr.mit.edu/benefits/retirement/after0712> and contact MIT Pension Service Center; tel. 1-855-464-8736.

## **ID Cards**

Check your current MIT ID card. If it has "Affiliate" written on the top, and an expiration date, go to the [Atlas Service Center](#) in E17 to request a new MIT ID card. Your new card will indicate "Employee" and no expiration date. You must present your current MIT ID card for identification purposes. (Alternatively, you may present a valid passport, a U.S. driver's license, or a U.S. government issued picture ID. See [details](#).)

## **Commuter Benefits**

***Access MIT Pass (MBTA)*** - All postdoctoral fellows and postdoctoral associates on MIT's Cambridge campus are eligible for free, unrestricted MBTA subway and local bus access. Your updated MIT ID card should also say "Charlie INSIDE!" indicating it has the MBTA chip inside to provide this access. (Fellows' access is made possible by MIT's Office of the EVPT.)

***Bicycle Rental; Bicycle-related Benefits***: These benefits are available for benefits-eligible postdoctoral associates. See details at <https://postdocs.mit.edu/home/campus-services-resources-and-tips/transportation-and-parking>

Commuter Rail and MBTA lot subsidies: Postdoctoral associates who commute by commuter rail are eligible for a 60% subsidy, as well as a 50% discount (up to \$100 per month) on parking at MBTA stations. For more details, please see:

<http://web.mit.edu/facilities/transportation/accessmit/index.html>

Parking: If you currently park on campus, check with your departmental parking coordinator or the MIT Parking Office to see if any additional steps are required.

## **Other Benefits and Perks**

Athletics: MIT postdoctoral associates and fellows pay the MIT Faculty/Staff/Postdoc rate.

Fitness Benefit: Members of the MIT Traditional and MIT Choice health plans are eligible for the \$150 annual fitness reimbursement.

MIT Work-Life Center: All postdoctoral scholars have access to **MyLife Services** and other resources. See the Work-Life Center section of this [page](#) for a link to the current flyer summarizing Work-Life benefits and services for postdocs.

Childcare scholarships (if otherwise eligible). Postdocs who already have scholarships must notify [Kathy Kasabula](#) of any change in appointment (including from fellow to associate) to update the award.

Additional employee benefits are available to postdoctoral associates. For details, review <http://hr.mit.edu/eligibility> and see the summary chart listed at the end.

## **Form I-9/Changes in Payroll/Tax Withholding**

### **Form I-9**

**Within 3 days of the start of your postdoctoral associate position, you must complete an I-9 form at the [Atlas Service Center](#), and present appropriate documentation.** See <https://hr.mit.edu/i-9> under “Supporting Documents” and under “What Else You Should Know-Newly Required Employees.” (If your most recent MIT position included MIT salary, such as a postdoctoral fellow with a partial postdoctoral associate appointment, you likely have already completed Form I-9, but may need it reverified. Check with the Atlas Service Center.)

### **Direct Deposit Preferences**

**Check to be sure your direct deposit preferences in Atlas are up to date**, so that your salary is deposited directly in your bank account: <https://atlas.mit.edu/atlas> (go to About Me / Money Matters / Direct Deposit Preferences).

### **International Postdocs**

Many international scholars and students are eligible for coverage by a **tax treaty**. Application of tax treaty coverage is NOT automatic, and eligibility for tax treaty coverage may change

during the change from postdoctoral fellow to postdoctoral associate. MIT offers the Glacier Tax Compliance System to foreign nationals receiving payment through MIT to assist them in determining their U.S. tax status (non-resident alien vs. resident alien) and eligibility for a tax treaty. The Office of the Vice President for Finance's HR/Payroll Service Center oversees this area.

If you have not already been contacted by MIT HR/Payroll, email [payroll@mit.edu](mailto:payroll@mit.edu) with your name, date of appointment change, title, and MIT ID, and a representative will respond to you with guidance. When applicable, you must file a new tax treaty exemption claim. For questions about taxation or tax treaties, please contact Marsha Dailey, Tax Treaty/Senior Payroll Coordinator in HR/Payroll; tel. 617-253-2799; email: [mdailey@mit.edu](mailto:mdailey@mit.edu); or by appointment. She schedules appointments on Tuesdays and Thursdays in E17-106, the Atlas Service Center.

Scholars may consult the Thomson Reuters *Foreign National Tax Resource*, available through the International Scholars Office: <http://web.mit.edu/scholars/intlscholars/taxes/software.html>.

### **Tax Withholding**

Upon change to postdoctoral associate status, you will see taxes withheld from your pay, unless you have documented tax treaty eligibility on file. More information can be found at the following webpages:

- Overview at <http://postdocs.mit.edu/postdoctoral-position/tax-information>
- Detailed information from the Office of the Vice President for Finance: [Impact of switching from a Postdoctoral Associate to a Postdoctoral Fellow appointment \(or vice versa\)](#) and [Fiscal Information for Postdoctoral Fellows and Associates](#). Their info on withholding may also be helpful: <https://vpf.mit.edu/index.php/review-tax-withholdings>
- International Scholars Office information: <http://web.mit.edu/scholars/intlscholars/taxes/>

### **Additional Tax Resources**

MIT MyLife Services also provides some tax resources: <https://hr.mit.edu/worklife/mylifeservices>

## **Changes related to Visa Sponsorship (International Postdocs)**

### **Visa Eligibility:**

Changing from postdoctoral fellow to postdoctoral associate does not usually necessitate a change of visa status. Both postdoctoral fellows and postdoctoral associates may hold J-1 visa status. However, unlike postdoctoral fellows, postdoctoral associates may be eligible for certain employment-based visas. If you have any questions about your visa status, please consult with an advisor in the International Scholars Office.

### **Updating Funding Information:**

If you hold a J-1 visa, it may be necessary to update the funding information on your DS-2019. Please contact the [International Scholars Office](#) for further details.

## Questions? Contact:

- Your departmental Key Administrative Contact for Postdocs  
<http://postdocs.mit.edu/postdocs-and-office-vpr/key-administrative-contacts-postdocs>
- Central HR: Mandy Chan, Senior Benefits Analyst, Human Resources, at tel. 617-258-6215 or email [mchann@mit.edu](mailto:mchann@mit.edu)

## Important! See also:

Defining Postdoc Fellows and Associates <http://postdocs.mit.edu/home/postdoctoral-position/defining-postdoc-fellows-and-associates>

Summary chart [Postdoctoral Associates and Fellows: Benefits and Provisions](#)

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*[Changing from Postdoctoral Fellow to Postdoctoral Associate; Rev. 10/29/2018]*