

Michael Smith Laboratories

Postdoc Resource Package

Fall 2025

Created by the MSL Postdoc and RA Committee



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Michael Smith Laboratories

First Nations Land Acknowledgement: We acknowledge that UBC's Point Grey campus is located on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the xwməθkwəy̓ əm (Musqueam) People.

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Welcome to the Michael Smith Laboratories (MSL)!

Dear Postdocs,

We are excited to have you join us as you begin your postdoctoral journey. At the MSL, you are entering a diverse and vibrant community of graduate students, research fellows and faculty. There are a wealth of available resources to support your professional growth, and to help you navigate them more easily, our Postdoctoral Fellow and Research Associate Committee has developed this resource package. Inside, you'll find key information on everything from appointment and HR processes to safety, health, and wellbeing. We've also included MSL-specific resources and activities to help you engage with our community and make the most of your time here.

The MSL Postdoctoral Fellow and Research Associate Committee, formed in 2024, is dedicated to connecting postdocs and research associates beyond their research work. We organize networking events, career development workshops, invited speaker seminars, and social activities to empower and support our community throughout the year.

We look forward to connecting with you and seeing your contributions to our dynamic research environment. Wishing you every success during your time at the MSL!

MSL Postdoc and RA Committee

1. All you need to know about the MSL

Founded on the vision of Nobel Laureate Dr. Michael Smith, UBC's Biotechnology Laboratory, renamed the Michael Smith Laboratories in 2004 with the opening of its new building, was the first of its kind: a vibrant, interdisciplinary hub bringing biologists and engineers together under one roof. Over the past two decades, it has grown into a collaborative community addressing society's most pressing challenges, and now hosts researchers from across UBC's Faculties of Science, Medicine, Applied Science, Forestry, and Land and Food Systems.

The Michael Smith Laboratories [Code of Conduct](#) outlines the responsibilities and expectations of acceptable behaviours of all individuals within the MSL.

MSL Resources

- **MSL website:** <https://www.msl.ubc.ca>
- **MSL contact list** (internal): <https://internal.msl.ubc.ca/internal/contact-lists> (CWL required)
- **Onboarding checklist** (internal)
- **Offboarding checklist** (internal)

Social media platforms

- **Instagram:** [@mslubc](#)
- **LinkedIn:** [UBC Michael Smith Laboratories](#)
- **X:** [@ubcmsl](#)

Departmental resources for equipment and room booking

- Equipment Bookings: <https://equipmentbooking.msl.ubc.ca>
- Equipment Management: <https://internal.msl.ubc.ca/internal/facility-support/equipment>
- Room Bookings: <https://roombooking.msl.ubc.ca>

For safety information, refer to the [Health & Safety](#) section of our internal website for general information, meeting minutes, and Building Emergency Response Plans.


MSL Activities

1) MSL Seminar Series

Regular trainee and faculty seminars take place from September to June typically on the third Wednesday of each month at 3 pm in MSL 102, followed by a social hour with refreshments and snacks in the MSL atrium. Once a year, there will be a Michael Smith Distinguished Lecture co-hosted by the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and the MSL, and a special lecture on next-generation biotechnologies hosted by the Postdoc and RA Committee.

2) MSL Postdoc and RA Seminar Series

The Postdoc and RA Committee hosts a monthly seminar series exclusively for postdocs and research associates (RAs), held at noon on the first Tuesday of each month. Interested



graduate students are also encouraged to sign up for the presentation to get feedback from postdocs and RAs. Invitations are sent ahead of each session. To sign up for a 10-minute talk, please contact [Lars Kruse](#) (RA from the Bohlmann Lab).

3) Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee

The [MSL EDI committee](#) is made up of students, staff and faculty with the goal of making the MSL an equitable place for all.

4) Postdoc Communications Group

Twice a year, a few postdoctoral fellows are recruited for a four-month program that develops their science communication skills while producing creative content for the MSL. Watch for the recruitment email from Emily Cooke, our Communications Coordinator, and visit the MSL [Newsroom](#) to explore their articles on diverse topics showcasing research, researchers, and postdoc perspectives.

5) Social Committee

The Social Committee hosts a variety of events throughout the year, including Thursday coffee socials, group hikes, summer BBQs, the holiday party and more. Show your support by joining in!

2. Postdoc Appointments

Postdoc career opportunities at UBC

While many postdoc positions at UBC can be found by contacting a faculty member directly, available positions are also posted on the following websites:

- [Postdoctoral Fellow Office](#)
- [Faculty Careers Workday portal](#)
- [MSL Careers page](#)

Appointment process

All postdoctoral fellows hold a formal faculty appointment at UBC, whether paid directly from UBC or from external fellowships or institutions. Postdoctoral fellows are integral to the University community and make essential contributions to its research environment. Their primary objectives are to expand their professional record and deepen their research/teaching expertise, thereby enhancing their future career prospects. They may also support the University's teaching mission and hold teaching appointments.

Appointment as a postdoctoral fellow, according to the [UBC Policy AP10](#), is intended to be a temporary position that begins within 5 years of being awarded a Ph.D. degree or 10 years of being awarded a MD or DDS degree.

Initial postdoctoral fellow appointments are typically for one year and are renewable up to 3 years (appointments may be renewable up to 5 years in total with the Dean's written approval).

Documents required for an appointment¹:

- Current CV with education and experience
- Offer letter signed & accepted by the postdoctoral fellow
- Proof of PhD completion
- Proof of legal entitlement to perform work for UBC
- Social Insurance Number (SIN)
- Copy of passport

Immigration for International postdoctoral fellows

Foreign postdoctoral fellows must obtain a temporary work permit to be employed or hold a trainee position at UBC. The Department or School will provide foreign PDFs with a UBC offer letter and Offer of Employment (LMIA Exempt) number. This information is required to obtain the necessary authorization to work in Canada. Foreign PDFs will also need to include a copy of their Ph.D./transcripts (or an official letter from the institution providing proof of near completion).¹

For assistance with the appointment or immigration process, contact your department HR. In the MSL, Michele or Marc can be reached at hr@msl.ubc.ca, in MSL 311 or by phone at 604-827-3919.

¹ UBC Postdoctoral Fellows Office. [A Guide for Postdoctoral Fellows](#). Updated July 2025.

3. Salary Recommendations

The Michael Smith Laboratories (MSL) strives to provide all postdoctoral fellows with fair and equitable wage. Below are the University guidelines for Postdoctoral Fellows compensation and the practices that the MSL adopts beyond these minimums. Given that recommendations and government minimum wage are regularly update, it's important to refer to the links for the most up to date information.

There are [two types of Postdoctoral Fellows](#), and in some cases postdocs are combination of both:

1. A postdoctoral fellow is an **employee** where the individual plays a key role on a research team under the direction of, and funded by, the supervising faculty member.
2. A postdoctoral fellow is an **award recipient** where the individual is awarded a competitive fellowship from an external granting agency, which may or may not be paid through UBC, or receives financial support from a sponsoring agency.

Regardless of the source of funding, the compensation must meet a minimum standard within the University.

[UBC Compensation Policy and Practice](#)

Salary ranges for Postdoctoral Fellows will vary depending on the availability of funding and may be governed by the regulations of granting agencies. Where no specific salary is mandated, the Postdoctoral Fellow's compensation is based on their relevant experience and responsibilities, with the final salary established by the supervising faculty member following consultation with the PDF.

[UBC Guidance on Postdoctoral Fellow Earnings](#)

There's no salary scale for Postdoctoral fellows, however as a guideline the salaries align with the annual award amounts provided by the [Tri-Agencies](#) (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC). If the faculty supervisor is unable to offer a salary that is in line with Tri-Agency amounts, they must at least provide a salary that meets the [BC minimum wage](#).

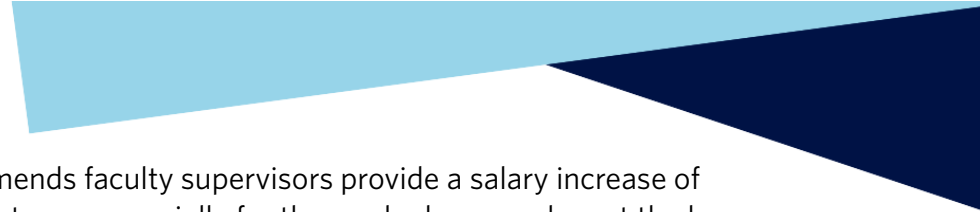
Postdoctoral Fellows Office Recommendation

The PDF Office recommends the University implements a [minimum stipend policy](#)² with a staged implementation, starting in the range of \$50,000 - \$55,000 per annum for the first 12 months, increasing by fixed annual amounts as appropriate.

Departmental Recommendations

Beyond meeting the minimum requirements of the University, the MSL encourages faculty members to offer salaries **at or above the living wage for metro Vancouver**. A living wage is the hourly amount that someone needs to earn to meet their basic expenses (including rent, food and transportation) once government taxes, credits, deductions and subsidies are taken into account. We reference [Living Wage BC](#) for this calculated value, and this is presented to faculty supervisors during the initial offer and annual reappointments.

² UBC Postdoctoral Fellows Office. (2025). [Towards a minimum stipend for UBC Postdoctoral Fellows](#).



In addition to this, the MSL recommends faculty supervisors provide a salary increase of \$1,000-\$2,000 for each subsequent year, especially for those who have a salary at the lower end of the range. This is to recognize the experience gained in the lab and mitigate the impact of inflation, since Postdoctoral Fellows are not eligible for government stipulated general wage increases (GWI).

4. Benefits

Postdoctoral fellows and their families are entitled to the BC Medical Service Plan (MSP) after the eligible wait period, extended health benefits, and other benefits.

To be eligible for extended health benefits, the PDF must have an appointment of at least one-year in length and a minimum of a 50% FTE appointment. You can complete your required enrolments through Workday ([instructions](#)).

Review the benefits package available for postdoctoral fellows [here](#).

Postdoctoral fellows (award recipients and employees):

- BC Medical Services Plan (MSP)
- Dental
- Extended Health
- Health Spending Account
- Surrogacy & Adoption
- Employee & Family Assistance Program
- Vacation & Leaves
- Benefits While Travelling

Postdoctoral fellows (award recipients): Postdoctoral Fellows whose awards are paid through UBC, receive Worker's Compensation coverage but not other Statutory Benefits, such as Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan. However, these Postdoctoral Fellows are eligible for all statutory holidays. Postdoctoral Fellows whose awards are paid directly to them and are not processed by UBC do not have Worker's Compensation coverage.³

For questions about your benefits coverage or eligibility: visit the [Benefits website](#), email the Benefits team at benefitsinfo@hr.ubc.ca or call 604-822-8111.

³ <https://hr.ubc.ca/working-ubc/faculty-titles-ranks-and-descriptions/postdoctoral-fellows/postdoctoral-fellows-award>

5. Wellbeing

Minimum required training

Upon employment, UBC provides a series of mandatory trainings essential for workplace safety:

- New Worker Safety Orientation
- Preventing and Addressing Workplace Bullying & Harassment
- Workplace Violence Prevention
- Preventing and Responding to Sexual Misconduct
- Privacy & Information Security Fundamentals, Part 1 and 2
- If you supervise or direct students or employees, complete the Safety Supervision, and Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace training

Workplace specific training

Depending on the nature of the lab, you may need to take any of the following training courses:

- Biosafety training
- Chemical safety training
- Laser safety training
- Radiation and x-ray safety training
- Transportation of dangerous goods training
- WHMIS training
- Environmental training

Occupational health

[UBC's OPH unit](#) provides confidential and free programs and services to help protect the health and safety of staff, faculty, and paid students working both on and off-campus, including UBC-Okanagan and hospital sites.

Mental health

Mental health resources are available for currently-appointed UBC Postdoctoral Fellows through the Employee and Family Assistance Program ([EFAP](#)).

EDI resources

- The [UBC Equity and Inclusion Office](#) provides a range of resources and initiatives to improve EDI across academic and operational settings.
- The [EDI Committee at the MSL](#) aims to foster a safe, equitable, and inclusive environment for everyone in the department, where people feel seen, heard and respected.

Sexual Violence Prevention and Response

UBC's Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office ([SVPRO](#)) is a safe and confidential place for students, faculty, staff, and postdoctoral fellows who have experienced sexual violence, regardless of where or when it took place.

Accessibility

For workplace accommodation and accessibility support, contact the [Centre for Workplace Accessibility](#) and speak confidentially with a Workplace Accessibility Specialist by phone at 604-822-8139 or by email at workplace.accessibility@ubc.ca.

Accommodation

UBC [Housing, Immigration and Relocation Services](#) provides resources for on- and off-campus rental housing options. UBC provides rental housing for faculty and staff on the Vancouver campus, consisting of over 1,200 unfurnished apartments and townhomes managed by its affiliate, Village Gate Homes. A minimum one-year lease is required. For details, photos, floor plans, and application information, visit the [Village Gate Homes](#) website.

Safety and security resources and emergency contacts

- Emergency Call 9-1-1: Fire, Ambulance, Police
- First Aid
 - Medical Emergencies: 9-1-1, then call First Aid
 - UBC Faculty, Staff, and Student-staff: 604-822-4444
 - UBC Students and Visitors: 604-822-2222
 - Closest defibrillator and naloxone kit: MSL lobby ([see locations for all defibrillators on campus](#))
- [UBC Campus Security](#): 604-822-2222
- [AMS SafeWalk](#): 604-822-5355
- [Safety & Risk Services \(SRS\)](#): 604-822-2029
- Biological & Radiation Safety: 604-822-9527
- Chemical Safety: 604-827-3409
- Emergency Management: 604-822-1237
- UBC Equity & Inclusion: 604-827-1773
- UBC Counselling Services: 604-822-3811
- UBC Student Health: 604-822-7011
- AMS Sexual Assault Support Centre: 604-827-5180
- Sexual Violence Prevention & Response (SVPRO): 604-822-1588
- To report an accident or incident: www.cairs.ubc.ca

See [Emergency and Non-Emergency Phone Numbers](#) for a complete listing.

6. Postdoc Career Development Resources

Fellowship opportunities

- UBC PDFO funding opportunities: <https://www.postdocs.ubc.ca/awards-funding/funding-opportunities>
- Tri-agency Canada Postdoctoral Research Award program: https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/PD-NP/cpra-bprc_eng.asp
- UBC PDF Travel Award: <https://www.postdocs.ubc.ca/award/pdf-travel-awards>

Professional training workshops

- UBC PDFO upcoming workshops and events: <https://www.postdocs.ubc.ca/professional-development-events>
- Mitacs courses: UBC-appointed Postdoctoral Fellows are eligible to enroll in Mitacs' catalogue of courses. Visit the [Events page](#) for information about upcoming facilitated sessions.

Project management

UBC PDFO provides a [Fundamentals of Project Management Program](#), and [Applied Project Management Program](#). Participants are required to attend all sessions in full, and a Certificate of completion will be issued.

Teaching skills

- The [Instructional Skills Workshop \(ISW\)](#) for Faculty and Postdocs is an internationally certified program designed to increase teaching effectiveness and encourage reflection on teaching practice.
- The [Postdoctoral Fellows Teaching Internship \(PDTI\)](#) is a teaching development program designed specifically for UBC postdocs who are interested in pursuing academic teaching as part of their career. This program is being offered by the PDFO in collaboration with the [Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning \(CIRTL\)](#).
- Find more higher-education teaching workshops at the [CIRTL](#) website.

Innovation

Resources about inventions and entrepreneurship at UBC can be found at [Innovation UBC](#).

7. Postdoc Career Development Resources at the MSL

Events hosted by the MSL Postdoc Committee

The MSL Postdoc and RA Committee is committed to offering career development workshops that help postdocs build essential professional skills for diverse career paths. In the upcoming academic year, we have the following events in the line-up—stay tuned for dates and details:

- Monthly Postdoc Seminar Series (first Tuesday of each month, notices will be sent)
- Postdoc Luncheon with Faculty Members
- Chalk Talk Training Workshop

MSL Pathway to Independence Award

The MSL has a tradition to sponsor the “MSL Pathway to Independence Awards” for postdocs each year. This competitive grant is open to all postdoctoral fellows currently supervised by an MSL appointed faculty member. The intention is to support postdoc's career development and offer the opportunity to lead a project in-line with their future career research focus. Each award is up to \$10,000 for a 12-month project.

Contact Us

If you are interested in joining the MSL Postdoc and RA Committee, please contact [Fangwu Wang](#) (Postdoc from the Hirst Lab). We also welcome any suggestions or feedback on the Postdoc Resource Package.