

# Applying to the NASA Postdoctoral Program

There are three application cycles each calendar year:

Cycle	Deadline
Fall	November 1
Spring	March 1
Summer	July 1

Applications must be received before **6:00 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time** prior to the cycle deadline. Applications received after the deadline will be considered in the next cycle.

*Note: You may submit only one application during a given application cycle.*

## Register before you apply

You must register on the Applicant Portal\* to submit your application to the NASA Postdoctoral Program. You may return and edit the application; you do not have to complete it in one session. (\*The Applicant Portal will be available starting January 15 on the new USRA NPP website: <https://npp.usra.edu/>)

## Identify a research opportunity

You should search the [available opportunities](#) before you begin your application. Once you have identified a research opportunity you should contact the advisor associated with that research opportunity by phone or e-mail. The advisor can provide more specific information on current research and available technical facilities and can offer scientific advice that may help you develop the proposal you must submit with your application.

## **Complete your application**

You will apply as either a **Postdoctoral Fellow** or a **Senior Fellow** depending on your seniority: A Postdoctoral Fellow has held the doctoral degree for less than five years at the time of application; A Senior Fellow has held the doctoral degree for five or more years at the time of application.

The Applicant portal will guide you through the application process. In addition to your application, you will need to arrange for 3 letters of recommendation. If you are applying as a Postdoctoral Fellow (i.e. if you have held your doctorate for less than five years), you must also arrange to send original transcripts from your graduate school.

## **Letters of Reference**

You must arrange for three letters of reference which must be received by the cycle deadline for your application to be considered in that cycle. If you are applying as a Postdoctoral Fellow (i.e. you have received your doctoral degree within the last five years), one reference must be from your thesis advisor. *Note that the NASA Research Opportunity Advisor should not serve as a reference, even if he or she was your thesis advisor.*

## **Writing Your Proposal**

After selecting your research opportunity to which you want to apply, contact the advisor associated with that opportunity to discuss your research plan and develop your research plan in collaboration with the advisor. You must submit a research proposal that responds to the goals and objectives described in the research opportunity you selected. Your proposal will be reviewed by the Center to assess its suitability for the research opportunity and may thereafter be reviewed by an external peer review committee.

## **Format of the Proposal**

The maximum length for the proposal is **15 pages**, including figures and citations; **double-spaced**; **12-point font**.

Proposals for the NASA Postdoctoral Research Program should begin with a brief abstract, followed by the body of the proposal, which should contain these components:

- a) statement of problem,
- b) background and relevance to previous work,
- c) general methodology, procedures to be followed, and timeline for completion of each step;
- d) explanation of new or unusual techniques,
- e) expected results and their significance and application, and
- f) literature citations, where appropriate.

## **Graduate Degree Transcripts**

If you are applying as a Postdoctoral Fellow, you must submit official graduate school transcripts. Transcripts are needed since they allow reviewers to compare the applicant's academic preparation and performance to that of other applicants. Senior Fellows are not required to provide transcripts.

## **Acceptable Transcripts**

A graduate degree transcript is an official report of the academic record of the student provided by the university. The transcript identifies the field of study, the topics studied, the depth of the study, and a measure of performance. The transcript should show titles of courses completed; credit hours or duration of the course; grades, marks, or subjective evaluations received by the student; academic status or honors received; and the degree(s) conferred. The transcript should be provided directly to USRA by the degree-granting university, and should have an original university seal, be printed on official letterhead and be signed by an official of the university.

The transcript should be sent by mail to USRA at

NASA Postdoctoral Program  
USRA  
7178 Columbia Gateway Dr.  
Columbia, MD, 21046

or e-mailed as a PDF document from the university to [mcorcoran@usra.edu](mailto:mcorcoran@usra.edu) . ***Transcripts sent by the applicant, regardless of the format, will not be accepted. Certificates, diplomas, or announcements of Ph.D. ceremonies that announce or record that an applicant has received the Ph.D. are not acceptable transcripts for the purpose of the NASA Postdoctoral Program.***

## Program Requirements

NASA Postdoctoral Program Fellows must meet the following program requirements:

- Fellows must have fulfilled all the eligibility requirements in order to receive their award.
- Fellows are **stipend recipients** and **not employees** of either NASA or USRA or of their host institution.
- Fellows must provide proof of health insurance, either through the Aetna plan offered by USRA, or from another qualified plan. If insured under another qualified plan, the Fellow must provide USRA with the insurer name, policy number, and copies of the front and back of your insurance card.
- The Fellow is required to maintain all safety, security, IT security and other training requirements of the host Center at which they are residing.
- Relocation plans and re-imbursments must be pre-approved by USRA 60 days prior to travel.

- The Fellow must commit to resident participation at an approved NASA site for the duration of the appointment, and avoid obligations that will interrupt the research during the appointment.
- Fellows are required to adhere to the host institution's requirements for prior review and approval of all material to be published. This includes material that will appear in print (including poster presentations at meetings) or material prepared for oral presentation.
- The Fellow is required to report all inventions made as a result of the appointment promptly to the director or patent counsel of his/her host institution and also to USRA.
- USRA does not assert any rights to inventions made during the appointment.
- NASA requires that the Fellow be fully involved in the research and educational opportunities available in the NPP appointment; the Fellow may not provide services for compensation to a third party, or supplement their stipends through simultaneous employment, grants, or other sources of income that compete with the Fellowship.