



NIH Policy Concerning Career Development (K) Awards: Leave, Temporary Adjustments to Percent Effort, and Part-Time Institutional Appointments

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Key Dates

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Purpose

This notice restates current NIH policy for career development (K) awards with respect to leave and temporary adjustments to percent effort, and announces a new policy concerning part-time institutional appointments.

Effective Date: Upon release, for all active and future K awards, including individual mentored K programs (K01, K07, K08, K18, K22, K23, K25, and K99/R00), individual non-mentored (independent) K programs (K02, K05, K07, and K24), and institutional K programs (K12, KL2). Exceptions are emphasized in notes below.

Background

NIH career development (K) awards are intended to support a period of mentored or independent career development in preparation for a role as an independent researcher (mentored K), or to enable and expand the grantee's potential to make significant contributions (independent K) in the biomedical, behavioral, and clinical sciences. Generally, K awards require the candidate to hold a full-time appointment at the applicant organization and devote a minimum of 75% of that appointment to the career award. However, NIH has historically allowed short-term adjustments to the minimum effort requirement under certain circumstances. For the purposes of this notice, the nature of the circumstances requiring a change in appointment status or percent effort might include personal or family situations such as parental leave, child care, elder care, medical conditions, or a disability. Permission to change appointment status or percent effort will not be approved to accommodate job opportunities, clinical practice, clinical training, or joint appointments.

Existing Policy for Off-Site Career Development and Leave of Absence

A temporary career development experience at another institution, including a foreign laboratory, may be permitted if the proposed experience is directly related to the purpose of the award. Only local approval from the grantee organization is required if such an arrangement does not exceed 3 months. For longer periods, prior written approval from the NIH awarding component is required. Details on the process for submission of prior approval requests can be found in the [NIH Grants Policy Statement \(rev. 12/03\), "Requests for Prior Approval."](#) A written request for off-site training lasting more than 3 months (but not more than 12 months) must be submitted to the NIH awarding component and must document the approval of the applicant organization and the adequacy of arrangements for off-site training. Support from the career award will continue during such an off-site career development experience.

Leave of absence may be taken without award support but may not exceed 12 months. The approval process for a leave of absence are identical to that described in the previous paragraph, and may be granted under certain

circumstances (for examples, see the Background section above). The K award will be placed in a no-cost extension for the duration of the unpaid leave and no charges to the grant will be allowed during that period. Such leave does not reduce the total number of months of support for which an individual is eligible.

Note for K22 and K99/R00 awardees: Because of the relatively short duration of the mentored phase of each of these awards, a request for approval of off-site career development or leave of absence lasting more than 3 months, must address the impact of such action on the awardee's ability to make sufficient progress to meet the goals of the award. For example, a request for leave from a K99 awardee must describe how the leave will affect the awardee's ability to transition to the R00 phase of the award.

Note for K07 (Leadership) and K24 awardees: Due to the special nature of these awards, a request for approval of off-site career development or leave of absence lasting more than 3 months, must describe plans to continue meeting the effort commitments of both the research and mentoring components of the award. In such cases, a letter assuring that arrangements have been made to continue to commit the appropriate effort to the research and to provide mentoring, must be submitted to the NIH awarding component.

Note for K12 and KL2 Scholar appointees: In general, Scholars are appointed to an institutional K12 or KL2 program for a period of 2-3 years, after which they may apply for their own individual K award (e.g., K08, K23) or a research grant. Because of the relatively short period of appointment on the institutional K program, a request for approval of off-site career development or leave of absence lasting more than 3 months, must address its impact on the Scholar appointee's ability to make sufficient progress to meet the goals of the program.

Existing Policy on Temporary Reduction in Percent Effort

Under certain circumstances (for examples, see the Background section), an awardee may submit a written request to the NIH awarding component requesting a reduction in professional effort to less than 75% (equivalent to 9 person-months) for up to 12 continuous months. Such requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In no case will it be permissible to work at less than 50% effort (equivalent to 6 person-months). For more information on person-months, see: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/person_months_faqs.htm. See the text below for additional provisions under the new policy on temporary adjustments to full-time appointments.

Note for K07 (Leadership) and K24 Awardees: Unlike the mentored K awards that require awardees to devote a minimum of 75% effort to career development and related activities, these two independent K awards require the recipient to devote between 25% and 50% effort to career development and mentoring activities. As such, awardees must continue to maintain between 25% and 50% effort to the program at all times.

New Policy on Part-Time Institutional Appointments

At the time of initial award, all candidates must meet the full-time appointment requirement as well as the minimum 75% effort requirement. Under the new policy, K awardees may request (see below) to reduce their appointment to less than full-time (but not less than three-quarter time) for a period not to exceed 12 continuous months during the K award project period. However, awardees may not simultaneously request a reduction in appointment status from full-time to part-time AND a reduction in percent effort to less than 75% (see above for existing policy on temporary reduction in percent effort). Note that these two options are only available after a K award has been issued. At the time of application and initial award, all candidates must meet the full-time appointment requirement as well as the minimum 75% effort requirement.

If requesting approval to change to a part-time appointment status, the K awardee must continue to commit at least 75% effort (of the part-time appointment) to research and career development activities. The K awardee is encouraged to consider increasing his/her percent effort on the K award to greater than 75% (e.g., 85%) to compensate for the anticipated effect of the part-time appointment on the K awardee's career progress. (For examples of circumstances requiring a change in the appointment status or percent effort, see the Background

section).

The grantee institution must submit a request and documentation to the NIH awarding component supporting the need for a reduced faculty appointment or percent effort and assuring the institution's continuing commitment to the scientific and research career development of the awardee. The K awardee should justify the request to reduce either his/her appointment to less than full-time status or to less than 75% effort and must describe the anticipated impact of the requested change on his/her career progress during the remainder of the K award period. In addition, the awardee must submit assurance of his/her intention to return to a full-time faculty appointment or to at least 75% effort as soon as possible. The mentor must provide a revised mentoring plan and specifically describe updated milestones for the awardee's progression to independence. Lastly, a revised statement of institutional commitment to the awardee must ensure continued "protected time" and describe additional support that will assist the K awardee to continue to make progress toward his/her goals during the requested period of reduced time/effort devoted to the K award. During the period of reduced appointment or percent effort, the salary and other costs supported by the award will be reduced accordingly. Requests must be submitted by the grantee institution to the awarding Institute or Center (IC) where they will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Note for K22 and K99/R00 awardees: Because of the relatively short duration of the mentored phase of the award, a request for reduction in appointment OR in percent effort devoted to the award must address the impact of this action on the awardee's ability to make sufficient progress to meet the goals of the program. For example, a K99 awardee must describe how the request will affect the awardee's ability to transition to the R00 phase of the award.

Note for K07 (Leadership) and K24 awardees: Awardees may reduce the full-time appointment required at the onset of the K award to less than full-time (but not less than three-quarter time) for a period not to exceed 12 continuous months during the K award project period. However, awardees are expected to continue to maintain between 25% (equivalent to 3 person-months) and 50% (equivalent to 6 person-months) of full-time professional effort at all times. Ideally, the K awardee will increase his/her percent effort on the award to compensate for the anticipated effect of the part-time appointment on the awardee's career goals.

Note for K12 and KL2 Scholar appointees: Because of the relatively short duration of the appointment for K12 and KL2 Scholars (generally 2-3 years), any request for reduction in appointment OR in percent effort devoted to the award must address the impact of this action on the Scholar appointee's ability to make sufficient progress to meet the goals of the program.

Inquiries

Questions concerning K policies articulated in this notice should be directed to the financial or grants management contact named in the Agency Contacts section of each K award funding opportunity announcement (see the [NIH K Kiosk](#)).

General questions concerning NIH K policies may be directed to:

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