

Survey of Postdoctoral Scholars at MIT, 2003

Overall Frequencies by Question (unweighted data, 296 responses)

YOUR POSTDOCTORAL APPOINTMENT

1. For how many total years have you held a postdoctoral position, including past and present positions?

	Count	Percent
Less than one	114	38.5%
One or more, but less than two	83	28.0%
Two or more, but less than three	49	16.6%
Three or more, but less than four	24	8.1%
Four or more, but less than five	12	4.1%
Five or more	14	4.7%
Overall	296	100.0%

2. How many more years do you plan on holding a postdoctoral position at MIT?

	Count	Percent
Less than one	85	28.8%
One or more, but less than two	111	37.6%
Two or more, but less than three	59	20.0%
Three or more, but less than four	15	5.1%
Four or more, but less than five	4	1.4%
Unsure	21	7.1%
Overall	295	100.0%

3. What is the primary source of funding for your present postdoctoral position?

	Count	Percent
Research contract or grant awarded to my supervisor	184	62.8%
U.S. Federal fellowship (e.g., NIH, NSF) awarded to me	18	6.1%
U.S. Federal Training Grant awarded to the dept/lab/center	12	4.1%
Non-federal fellowship (e.g., American Cancer Soc.)	28	9.6%
Foreign government/agency	32	10.9%
Private company	11	3.8%
Personal funds	3	1.0%
Other (please specify)	5	1.7%
Overall	293	100.0%

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4. Does the term of your postdoctoral appointment depend on you securing funding?

	Count	Percent
Yes	89	30.6%
No	202	69.4%
Overall	291	100.0%

5. If your postdoctoral funding sources changed during your time at MIT, did you have any difficulties with any of the following during your transition? (mark all that apply)

	Count	Percent of Respondents n = 83
Health insurance	53	63.9%
Dental insurance	39	47.0%
Retirement plan	30	36.1%
Paycheck (incorrect delivery, late, check amount error, etc.)	26	31.3%
Transportation (parking, T-pass, etc.)	13	15.7%
Understanding tax implications of different appointments	33	39.8%
Other (please specify)	11	13.3%

6. On average, how many hours per week do you work on your postdoc job (including field work and other off-site work)?

	Count	Percent
< 30 hours per week	9	3.1%
30-39 hours per week	9	3.1%
40-49 hours per week	82	27.9%
50-59 hours per week	97	33.0%
60 hours or more per week	97	33.0%
Overall	294	100.0%

BENEFITS AND SERVICES

7. Which of the following best describes your current situation?

	Count	Percent
I receive health insurance through MIT	217	74.3%
I receive health insurance through sponsor	17	5.8%
I receive health insurance through spouse's employer	30	10.3%
I am not covered by health insurance	10	3.4%
Other (please specify)	18	6.2%
Overall	292	100.0%

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8. Which of the following best describes the financing of your health insurance?

	Count	Percent
I receive it as part of my postdoctoral associate benefits package	127	44.3%
Paid out of the allowance that comes with my fellowship or training grant support	58	20.2%
Paid by my supervisor using other MIT funds	11	3.8%
Personal funds	54	18.8%
Spouse (through spouse's employment)	27	9.4%
Other (please specify)	10	3.5%
Overall	287	100.0%

9. Which of the following best describes your current situation?

	Count	Percent
I receive dental insurance through MIT	145	49.7%
I receive dental insurance through sponsor	6	2.1%
I receive dental insurance through spouse's employer	31	10.6%
I receive dental insurance coverage under COBRA from prior coverage	0	0.0%
I am not covered by dental insurance	98	33.6%
Other (please specify)	12	4.1%
Overall	292	100.0%

10a. Do you have dependent children living with you?

	Count	Percent
Yes	69	23.7%
No	222	76.3%
Overall	291	100.0%

10b. Please select the number of children living with you.

	Count	Percent
1	47	65.3%
2	21	29.2%
3	2	2.8%
4	1	1.4%
6	1	1.4%
Overall	72	100.0%

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11. Are you satisfied with your current childcare situation?

	Count	Percent
Very satisfied	9	9.0%
Satisfied	30	30.0%
Neutral	10	10.0%
Dissatisfied	11	11.0%
Very dissatisfied	6	6.0%
Not applicable	34	34.0%
Overall	100	100.0%

12. How aware are you that there are career guidance services through the Office of Career Planning and Pre-professional Advising for individuals in postdoctoral positions at MIT?

	Count	Percent
Very aware	26	9.0%
Somewhat aware	130	44.8%
Not aware at all	134	46.2%
Overall	290	100.0%

13. How important do you think institutional postdoctoral career guidance services are for you?

	Count	Percent
Extremely important	39	13.7%
Important	103	36.1%
Somewhat important	98	34.4%
Not important	45	15.8%
Overall	285	100.0%

14. How aware are you of the mediation/grievance procedures available to you at MIT?

	Count	Percent
Very aware	17	5.9%
Somewhat aware	91	31.5%
Not aware at all	181	62.6%
Overall	289	100.0%

15. How important do you think institutional mediation/grievance services are for you?

	Count	Percent
Extremely important	15	5.4%
Important	79	28.4%
Somewhat important	102	36.7%
Not important	82	29.5%
Overall	278	100.0%

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TRAINING AND EDUCATION

16. Why did you choose your current postdoctoral position? (mark all that apply)

	Count	Percent of Respondents n = 286
Postdoctoral training is a necessary step to getting employment in my field	176	61.5%
To gain additional training in my field	148	51.7%
To gain additional training in different field or sub-discipline from my doctoral research	151	52.8%
To work with a specific individual at MIT	128	44.8%
To work on a specific research problem at MIT	87	30.4%
To work at MIT because of its academic reputation	151	52.8%
To work in the Boston area	75	26.2%
To work in the same general location as my spouse/partner	59	20.6%
Because it was the only acceptable employment at the time	29	10.1%
Other (please specify)	5	1.7%

17. Of the reasons listed in Question 16, which one was the most important factor in your decision to come to MIT?

	Count	Percent
Postdoctoral training is a necessary step to getting employment in my field	50	18.0%
To gain additional training in my field	32	11.5%
To gain additional training in different field or sub-discipline from my doctoral research	44	15.8%
To work with a specific individual at MIT	50	18.0%
To work on a specific research problem at MIT	28	10.1%
To work at MIT because of its academic reputation	30	10.8%
To work in the Boston area	4	1.4%
To work in the same general location as my spouse/partner	23	8.3%
Because it was the only acceptable employment at the time	16	5.8%
Other (please specify)	1	0.4%
Overall	278	100.0%

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18. If your present position is in a research group, how large is the group (include your supervisor, research staff, postdocs, graduate students, and undergraduates who are involved in research and work at least 25 percent time)?

	Count	Percent
Small (< 10 people)	112	39.2%
Medium (10-15 people)	86	30.1%
Large (15-29 people)	68	23.8%
More than 30 people	13	4.5%
I don't work in a research group	7	2.4%
Overall	286	100.0%

19. Does your postdoctoral supervisor conduct regularly scheduled research group meetings?

	Count	Percent
Yes	200	70.2%
Usually	47	16.5%
No	38	13.3%
Overall	285	100.0%

20. If you have regularly scheduled research group meetings, how valuable do you find these meetings?

	Count	Percent
Very valuable	76	27.6%
Valuable	111	40.4%
Somewhat valuable	59	21.5%
Not valuable	8	2.9%
I don't have regularly scheduled group meetings	21	7.6%
Overall	275	100.0%

21. In the last academic year, on average, how often did you meet individually with your supervisor?

	Count	Percent
Several times per week	45	15.7%
Weekly	71	24.8%
1 to 3 times per month	129	45.1%
Once per semester	36	12.6%
Yearly	4	1.4%
Never	1	0.3%
Overall	286	100.0%

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22. How satisfied are you with the amount of contact with your postdoctoral supervisor?

	Count	Percent
Very satisfied	77	27.0%
Satisfied	120	42.1%
Neutral	65	22.8%
Dissatisfied	21	7.4%
Extremely dissatisfied	2	0.7%
Overall	285	100.0%

23. How satisfied are you with the quality of guidance/mentoring you have received from your postdoctoral supervisor?

	Count	Percent
Very satisfied	79	27.5%
Satisfied	122	42.5%
Neutral	59	20.6%
Dissatisfied	21	7.3%
Extremely dissatisfied	6	2.1%
Overall	287	100.0%

24. In the last academic year, on average, how often did you have significant scientific discussions with MIT faculty other than your MIT supervisor/PI?

	Count	Percent
Several times per week	8	2.8%
Weekly	22	7.8%
1 to 3 times per month	82	29.0%
Once per semester	76	26.9%
Yearly	20	7.1%
Never	75	26.5%
Overall	283	100.0%

25. How important are these interactions with other MIT faculty to you?

	Count	Percent
Essential	45	16.6%
Very important	87	32.1%
Important	87	32.1%
Somewhat important	38	14.0%
Not important at all	14	5.2%
Overall	271	100.0%

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26. Have you received a written or oral performance evaluation while you have been in a postdoctoral position at MIT? (mark all that apply)

	Count	Percent of Respondents n = 282
Yes, I have received a written evaluation	8	2.8%
Yes, I have received an oral evaluation	21	7.4%
Yes, I have received informal feedback on my performance	89	31.6%
No	179	63.5%

27. Do you think performance evaluations are important for individuals in postdoctoral positions?

	Count	Percent
Yes	107	38.5%
Probably	89	32.0%
Not particularly	79	28.4%
Other (please explain)	3	1.1%
Overall	278	100.0%

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28a. Please indicate the importance to you of each of the following skills in developing a successful career.

	Not important at all		Somewhat important		Important		Very important		Essential		N
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
Becoming an authority in my field	7	2.5%	25	8.9%	59	20.9%	88	31.2%	103	36.5%	282
Knowing the latest research techniques	2	0.7%	17	6.1%	53	18.9%	114	40.7%	94	33.6%	280
Writing papers for publication	2	0.7%	7	2.5%	26	9.2%	69	24.4%	179	63.3%	283
Presenting research results to an audience of peers	4	1.4%	18	6.5%	49	17.6%	94	33.7%	114	40.9%	279
Writing grant proposals	5	1.8%	23	8.2%	59	21.0%	94	33.5%	100	35.6%	281
Managing a laboratory	26	9.4%	38	13.7%	76	27.4%	80	28.9%	57	20.6%	277
Supervising graduate students	13	4.6%	51	18.2%	88	31.4%	84	30.0%	44	15.7%	280
Teaching	20	7.2%	59	21.2%	89	32.0%	74	26.6%	36	12.9%	278
Working in a team	6	2.1%	35	12.5%	79	28.1%	103	36.7%	58	20.6%	281
Understanding how an academic organization works	15	5.4%	58	20.9%	84	30.2%	86	30.9%	35	12.6%	278
Understanding my discipline outside of MIT	7	2.6%	30	11.0%	84	30.9%	92	33.8%	59	21.7%	272
Negotiating with people in authority	13	4.7%	39	14.1%	94	34.1%	90	32.6%	40	14.5%	276
Collaborating with other researchers	3	1.1%	15	5.4%	64	23.0%	119	42.8%	77	27.7%	278
Understanding principles of ethical conduct of research	8	2.9%	37	13.6%	76	27.8%	83	30.4%	69	25.3%	273
Other (please specify)	1	8.3%	0	0.0%	2	16.7%	5	41.7%	4	33.3%	12

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28b. Please indicate the extent to which your current postdoctoral position is enhancing these skills.

	None		Only a little		Some		A lot		Quite a bit		N
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
Becoming an authority in my field	8	2.9%	23	8.3%	93	33.5%	106	38.1%	48	17.3%	278
Knowing the latest research techniques	5	1.8%	20	7.3%	76	27.6%	110	40.0%	64	23.3%	275
Writing papers for publication	13	4.7%	30	10.8%	91	32.9%	94	33.9%	49	17.7%	277
Presenting research results to an audience of peers	16	5.9%	36	13.2%	106	39.0%	86	31.6%	28	10.3%	272
Writing grant proposals	83	30.3%	52	19.0%	62	22.6%	52	19.0%	25	9.1%	274
Managing a laboratory	71	26.6%	71	26.6%	66	24.7%	38	14.2%	21	7.9%	267
Supervising graduate students	86	31.9%	53	19.6%	81	30.0%	37	13.7%	13	4.8%	270
Teaching	164	60.5%	51	18.8%	31	11.4%	15	5.5%	10	3.7%	271
Working in a team	28	10.3%	48	17.6%	98	35.9%	71	26.0%	28	10.3%	273
Understanding how an academic organization works	36	13.3%	64	23.7%	106	39.3%	47	17.4%	17	6.3%	270
Understanding my discipline outside of MIT	25	9.4%	66	24.8%	102	38.3%	56	21.1%	17	6.4%	266
Negotiating with people in authority	78	28.9%	68	25.2%	78	28.9%	38	14.1%	8	3.0%	270
Collaborating with other researchers	21	7.7%	40	14.8%	84	31.0%	85	31.4%	41	15.1%	271
Understanding principles of ethical conduct of research	38	14.1%	58	21.5%	97	35.9%	48	17.8%	29	10.7%	270
Other (please specify)	4	23.5%	3	17.6%	3	17.6%	3	17.6%	4	23.5%	17

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29a. As a postdoc, I have refined the skills that I learned as a graduate student.

	Count	Percent
Disagree	11	3.9%
Somewhat disagree	13	4.6%
Neither agree nor disagree	38	13.5%
Somewhat agree	107	37.9%
Agree	113	40.1%
Overall	282	100.0%

29b. As a postdoc, I have learned many new skills.

	Count	Percent
Disagree	6	2.1%
Somewhat disagree	20	7.1%
Neither agree nor disagree	24	8.5%
Somewhat agree	81	28.7%
Agree	151	53.5%
Overall	282	100.0%

30. While you have been a postdoc at MIT, on average, how many conferences/professional meetings have you attended or plan to attend per year?

	Count	Percent
None	27	9.5%
One	100	35.1%
Two	99	34.7%
Three	33	11.6%
More than three	26	9.1%
Overall	285	100.0%

31. What was the primary source of funding for these conferences?

	Count	Percent
Personal funds	11	3.9%
Funds under the control of my supervisor	175	62.3%
Fellowship or grant awarded to me	50	17.8%
Funds under the control of the department/lab/center	10	3.6%
Other (please specify)	5	1.8%
Not applicable	30	10.7%
Overall	281	100.0%

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32. What was your principal career track goal when you started your first postdoctoral position, and what is it now?

	When began		Now	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Tenure track faculty - emphasis on research	174	61.9%	155	56.0%
Tenure track faculty - emphasis on teaching	23	8.2%	16	5.8%
Researcher in industry	43	15.3%	49	17.7%
Researcher at government agency or national laboratory	9	3.2%	12	4.3%
Researcher (not faculty) in academia	19	6.8%	24	8.7%
Policy/administrator in industry	0	0.0%	1	0.4%
Policy/administrator in government agency	1	0.4%	3	1.1%
Policy/administrator in academia	0	0.0%	1	0.4%
Consultant	2	0.7%	3	1.1%
Journalism/science writing	0	0.0%	1	0.4%
Start your own company	3	1.1%	3	1.1%
Other (please specify)	7	2.5%	9	3.2%
Overall	281	100.0%	277	100.0%

33. If you have changed your career track goal, what is the principal reason for this change?

	Count	Percent
Money	8	4.7%
Autonomy	6	3.5%
Spouse's career/location	1	0.6%
Geographic preference	1	0.6%
Difficulty of obtaining desired position	20	11.8%
Riskiness/insufficient job security	9	5.3%
Balancing work and personal life	29	17.1%
Peer pressure	0	0.0%
Change in research direction	5	2.9%
Not applicable	83	48.8%
Other (please specify)	8	4.7%
Overall	170	100.0%

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34. Do you agree with the following statement: "My present postdoctoral position is preparing me adequately for my current career goals."

	Count	Percent
Agree	124	43.2%
Somewhat agree	104	36.2%
Not sure/neutral	42	14.6%
Somewhat disagree	8	2.8%
Disagree	9	3.1%
Overall	287	100.0%

POSTDOC ORGANIZATION

35. MIT is establishing an Association of Postdoctoral Scholars. We are interested in knowing what services, if any, you think this association should support.

Please rate the functions you think that an Association of Postdoctoral Scholars at MIT should perform.

	Extremely important		Important		Somewhat important		Not important		N
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
Help provide more career services to postdocs	96	34.2%	133	47.3%	43	15.3%	9	3.2%	281
Publish an informational manual for incoming postdocs	71	25.4%	119	42.5%	81	28.9%	9	3.2%	280
Provide postdoc representation to MIT administration	61	21.8%	133	47.5%	70	25.0%	16	5.7%	280
Provide information and referrals to postdocs for benefits and rights	83	29.7%	142	50.9%	50	17.9%	4	1.4%	279
Organize postdoc seminar series (research and career seminars)	44	15.7%	115	40.9%	98	34.9%	24	8.5%	281
Organize social functions for interactions with other postdocs	43	15.4%	95	33.9%	107	38.2%	35	12.5%	280

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OVERALL SATISFACTION

36. How satisfied are you with your overall postdoctoral experience at MIT?

	Count	Percent
Very satisfied	68	23.9%
Satisfied	168	59.2%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	35	12.3%
Somewhat dissatisfied	8	2.8%
Not satisfied	5	1.8%
Overall	284	100.0%

37. Would you recommend spending time in a postdoctoral position in your field to a present graduate student who is similar to you in his/her career goals?

	Count	Percent
Would enthusiastically recommend	73	25.6%
Would recommend	166	58.2%
Neutral	30	10.5%
Would recommend with reservation	11	3.9%
Would not recommend	5	1.8%
Overall	285	100.0%

38. Would you recommend spending time in a postdoctoral position at MIT to a present graduate student who is similar to you in his/her career goals?

	Count	Percent
Would enthusiastically recommend	75	26.3%
Would recommend	151	53.0%
Neutral	37	13.0%
Would recommend with reservation	16	5.6%
Would not recommend	6	2.1%
Overall	285	100.0%

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

39. Are you currently married or living with a long-term partner?

	Count	Percent
Yes	185	64.7%
No	101	35.3%
Overall	286	100.0%

40. Does your spouse/partner work outside the home?

	Count	Percent
Yes	138	77.5%
No	40	22.5%
Overall	178	100.0%

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41. Does your spouse/partner work in academia?

	Count	Percent
Yes	75	41.7%
No	105	58.3%
Overall	180	100.0%

42. Does your spouse/partner work in the Boston area?

	Count	Percent
Yes	112	63.3%
No	65	36.7%
Overall	177	100.0%

43. Which of the following best describes your current income in your postdoctoral position?

	Count	Percent
< \$25,000	8	2.8%
\$25,001-27,000	7	2.5%
\$27,001-31,000	38	13.4%
\$31,001-35,000	72	25.4%
\$35,001-40,000	77	27.1%
\$40,001-45,000	51	18.0%
\$45,001-50,000	14	4.9%
> \$50,000	17	6.0%
Overall	284	100.0%

44. Which of the following best describes your current annual family income from all sources?

	Count	Percent
< \$31,000	27	9.7%
\$31,001-40,000	75	26.9%
\$40,001-50,000	55	19.7%
\$50,001-75,000	62	22.2%
\$75,001-100,000	45	16.1%
\$100,001-150,000	13	4.7%
> \$150,000	2	0.7%
Overall	279	100.0%

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

45. What one thing should MIT consider doing to enhance your career preparation?

46. What one thing should MIT consider doing to enhance the community for postdocs while they are at MIT?