

Industry Postdocs, Frequently Asked Questions

PDCO Career Resources

As more and more graduate students express interest in pursuing careers in industry companies have started to create their own formal postdoctoral programs to train recent PhD graduates on the industry side of science. PDCO has hosted multiple webinars with industry postdoc programs and we compiled this list of frequently asked questions for students who are interested in pursuing a postdoc in biotech/pharma companies.

To learn about scientific careers in industry, check out the [PDCO industry career path page](#).

What is an industry postdoc? Why would you do an industry postdoc instead of a full-time job in industry?

The goal of an industry postdoc is similar to an academic postdoc: it is an opportunity for PhD scientists to develop independent projects, publish, and receive mentorship and training (both scientific and professional development) that sets them up for a successful career. Generally, staff scientist positions in industry settings require a good match of skills and expertise to get hired and (sometimes) industry experience. However, such strict requirements on technical skills/expertise is not as necessary for postdoc positions, therefore, they are great entryways into industry for scientists who do not meet the technical requirements and/or do not have industry experience. Postdoc positions are seen as training positions and thus have established mentor(s), set goals and expectations, and a time limit.

How does an industry postdoc differ from an academic postdoc?

The basic goals of industry and academic postdocs are similar, but there are a few key differences:

- Most industry postdocs are considered company employees and thus have a competitive salary and benefits package; industry postdocs typically pay about 20% more than academic postdocs. Some companies also offer relocation benefits, annual bonuses, and retirement matching for their postdocs. These benefits can be found in academic settings but are rare.
- Industry postdocs will have increased exposure to industry-style science and the business side of science
- Many of the industry postdoc programs are more structured programs than academic postdocs and have set time frames, formal training opportunities, and set expectations including required publishing goals, participation in meetings and conferences, and professional development programming.
- While postdocs in industry are able (and expected) to publish peer-reviewed articles and attend conferences, they may not qualify for some funding opportunities.

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What are my career options after an industry postdoc? Will the company hire their own postdocs? Can I apply to academic faculty jobs after?

While the majority of industry postdocs tend to stay in industry, some choose to transition to government, academia, or other fields. Some companies don't hire their own postdocs as a general rule and most companies don't guarantee a full-time position upon completion of a postdoc. If a job opens that is a good match for a senior postdoc, then they may be allowed to apply for the position and will be considered in the same pool as outside candidates. Regardless, professional development training and building a professional network is emphasized in industry postdoc programs, so postdocs are well-prepared to have a successful job search upon completion. Industry postdoc programs typically track career outcomes of their alumni and will share this information with prospective postdocs.

Scientists who do a postdoc in industry may have a difficult time developing an independent project that they can take with them into an academic faculty role. If you are interested in pursuing an academic faculty position, we recommend you ask about this during the postdoc interview process.

Will I still get to publish and present my work at conferences?

Publishing and presenting your scientific work is a critical aspect of postdoctoral training and therefore companies have postdocs work on projects that are able to be published publicly. All companies with postdoc programs allow, and encourage, postdocs to present their work at national meetings and some even host their own internal meetings with presentation opportunities.

If applying to and receiving funding is important for you (i.e., if you still want to go back to academia), make sure you ask about the feasibility of writing grants prior to applying.

How do I apply? Are there eligibility requirements?

Each company differs in their application process: some have rolling admissions throughout the year and applicants apply to work on specific projects, while other companies have cohort-based programs that only accept applicants once a year. Generally, most applications consist of a CV, statement, and references. See the list below to learn the application and eligibility requirements for each company.

Many former JHU PhD students have successfully landed postdoc positions at lead biotech & pharma companies. Use your alumni network to set up informational interviews with your peers to learn more about different industry settings.

Biotech and pharma companies with postdoc programs (not a comprehensive list):

As you evaluate postdoctoral training opportunities in industry, be aware that some companies will hire recent PhD graduates into postdoctoral positions, but do not have a formal postdoctoral training programs. The PDCO has confirmed that the following companies have

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robust postdoctoral training programs that offer professional development training, mentorship, and career support:

Please note, this is not a comprehensive list.

- *Genentech: <https://www.gene.com/careers/university-and-early-career/postdocs>
- *J&J/Janssen: <https://www.janssen.com/careers/postdoctoral-program>
- *AstraZeneca: https://careers.astrazeneca.com/students/programmes/postdocs_medi
- *Novartis: <https://www.novartis.com/our-science/postdoc-program>
- *Regeneron: <https://www.regeneron.com/postdoctoral-training-program>
- Pfizer: <http://www.pfizer.com/careers/en/postdoctoral-program>
- Biogen: https://www.biogen.com/en_us/postdoctoral-program.html
- Abbvie: <https://www.abbvie.com/careers/roles/us-professional-programs.html>
- Merck: <https://www.merck.com/research/fellow/home.html>
- GSK: <https://www.gsk.com/en-gb/careers/postgraduate-opportunities/postdoctoral-rd/>
- Roche:
https://www.roche.com/careers/country/hungary/workplaces/wp_research/postdoc_fellowship_rpf_program.htm
- Sanofi: <https://jobs.sanofi.us/early-career-programs-us>
- Eli Lilly: <https://careers.lilly.com/visiting-scientist>
- Microsoft: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/research/careers/>
- NSF Innovative Postdoctoral Entrepreneurial Research Fellowship (multiple postdoc opportunities at a start-up companies): <https://iperf.asee.org/>

* = view a previously-recorded webinar with this company [here](#).

Resources:

- Industry Research, PDCO Resource: <https://pdco.med.jhmi.edu/career-exploration/career-paths/industry-research/>
- Industrial Postdocs: The Road Less Traveled. Science, 2008:
<http://www.sciencemag.org/features/2008/06/industrial-postdocs-road-less-traveled>
- Industry Training and Postdoc Programs. ASBMB Careers Blog, 2019:
<https://www.asbmb.org/Careers/Blog/Posts/80505/>
- A Different Kind of Postdoc Experience. Science, 2015:
<https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2015/06/different-kind-postdoc-experience>
- Consider Post-Doctoral Training in Industry. Nature Biotechnology, 2005:
<https://www.nature.com/articles/nbt0105-151>

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