

Graduate and Postdoc Society (GAPS)

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Physical Sciences Division
Office of the Director, TRIUMF

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Dear Dr. Jens Dilling

The Graduate and Postdoc Society (GAPS) at TRIUMF recently initiated a discussion regarding the current status of vacation allowance for postdoctoral research fellows (PDF) at the laboratory. An anonymous survey was distributed among PDF to assess current opinions on a number of issues in more detail. The results of the survey were discussed on 2nd November 2016 in a meeting well-attended by PDF. The complete results of the survey are freely available on request, while the key points are summarized in this letter.

As of December 1st 2014, TRIUMF policy states that PDF are entitled to a minimum of 2 weeks vacation (10 days) per calendar year. Around 70% of respondents had 10 days stipulated in their TRIUMF contract while the remainder had 15 days or more. While this is consistent with policy, most respondents (80%) are dissatisfied with the current status of their vacation allowance, particularly in receiving less vacation compared to other TRIUMF employees of similar standing as well as their peers. GAPS also notes that the current minimum number of vacation days compares unfavorably with that of competing laboratories. Most respondents support a uniform minimum of 15 vacation days for PDF.

Additional concerns raised by respondents relate to the consistency and transparency of the existing policy. A few examples are provided here. Firstly, 20 % of respondents have noticed inconsistencies between the number of allotted vacation days entered in the TRIUMF online system and their contract. GAPS believes all TRIUMF employees could benefit from a more transparent and informative online system to track their vacation status. Secondly, in several instances the number of vacation days agreed between the PDF and the supervisor/grant holder in their contract was not subsequently ratified by human resources. This lack of co-operation has been attributed to, for example, differences between NRC and NSERC-funded projects. However, GAPS finds this explanation contradictory and the discrepancy unjustifiable. Lastly, if the supervisor of a PDF is not able to address grievances relating to vacation allowance (or other contractual issues), GAPS recommends that the PDF be clearly informed of an alternative official channel whereby a solution may be found.

On behalf of the postdoctoral community at TRIUMF, GAPS welcomes further discussion of the broad range of issues communicated in this letter with the laboratory directorate.

Sincerely,

Graduate and Postdoc Society (GAPS) on behalf of TRIUMF Postdoctoral Fellows