

Frequently Asked Questions

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1. What is the history behind the January 7 response deadline in HET?

The agreement on a common acceptance deadline for postdoc offers in theoretical high energy physics was reached in 2007. The open letter to the community, original signatories, and FAQs (including the rationale for selecting January 7) are provided [here](#).

The original motivation for the deadline continues to remain valid today: it is imperative that junior researchers are offered enough time in which to make important job decisions. It also ensures that candidates have a full set of options to choose from (not being limited to an early offer with a short deadline). The purpose of this survey is to gauge the community interest in extending this deadline to later in January or early February, not to abolish it.

2. Would moving the common deadline later lead to logistical challenges?

The astronomy community provides proof that a later postdoc deadline can work. In this community, most postdoc offers are made in January and the response deadline is not earlier than Feb 15. The American Astronomical Society's (AAS) policy, adopted in 1988 and later reaffirmed in 2003 and 2006, can be found [here](#).

It is important to be cognizant of how a later response deadline can affect applicants who need to apply for visas, prepare for a long-distance move, arrange child-care, and/or coordinate dual careers. As the Feb 15 deadline has been adhered to by the astronomy community for several decades, presumably visa/moving issues have not posed a significant impediment to newly-appointed postdocs in that field (barring extenuating circumstances). This survey does not consider any deadlines that extend past Feb 15.

3. What are the timelines for the multidisciplinary postdoctoral fellowships?

- **Berkeley Miller Fellowship**
Acceptance deadline is typically the third week of January
- **Harvard Society of Junior Fellows**
Acceptance deadline is the end of January
- **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions**
Offers made ~mid-late February
- **MIT Pappalardo Fellowship**
Acceptance deadline is currently Jan 7 to be in-line with the HET deadline
- **NASA Hubble Fellowship**
Offers typically made at the end of Jan/beginning of Feb, with an acceptance deadline of Feb 15
- **Princeton Center for Theoretical Science (PCTS) Fellowship**
No official acceptance deadline; informal encouragement to respond by early January
- **UC Presidential and Chancellor Fellowships**
Offers made at the end of February

4. How can we avoid having a deadline that falls on a weekend, which encounters similar administrative challenges as one that falls during the holiday period?

One option is to frame the deadline as the “the Xth Wednesday in January/February.” Wednesday is a convenient choice as it maximizes the number of weekdays before/after the deadline for coordinating new offers.

5. Would a later deadline mean that applicants hold onto offers for longer?

It is not clear that this will necessarily be the case, as a later response deadline may mean that individual institutions decide to make their offers later as well. The data from the rumor mill (kindly provided by Felix Yu), averaged over the last 6 years, indicates that candidates who currently receive an offer before Jan 7 on average accept within 12 days of receiving their preferred offer. In general, applicants should be aware that the “best practice” is to not hold onto multiple offers longer than is needed to make their decision.

6. Would extending the response deadline unreasonably extend second and third-round offers for many weeks/months?

Data from the postdoc rumor mill sheds some light on this question. Over the last six hiring seasons, 90% of all offers in a given year were accepted within two

weeks of the Jan 7 deadline, and 95% within three weeks. There are two important caveats to keep in mind when interpreting this data. First, there may be a delay between when an applicant accepts an offer and when they post it to the rumor mill (although this just makes the conclusions conservative). Second, applicants who receive offers more than one week beyond the Jan 7 deadline may be less likely to report it to the rumor mill.

7. What are the next steps after this survey?

This survey is purely an attempt at data gathering across our community, and the (anonymized) results will be shared publicly.

If the survey demonstrates that there is no significant community interest in pushing the Jan 7 postdoc deadline later, then no further action will be taken.

If the survey finds significant community interest, then we will work with those groups with the strongest administrative constraints to ensure that the proposed new deadline will be viable for all. In June, a community-wide virtual Town Hall will be hosted to gather feedback before a new accord is distributed for signing across institutions. Our goal would be to collect signatures on behalf of institutions over the summer (July - Sep) so the new accord can be in place next academic year.

8. How can I get involved?

Thanks for asking! We are a grass-roots effort and would certainly appreciate additional support, especially from representatives of countries and/or HET sub-fields not currently reflected in the organizing group. If you are interested, send an email to het.postdoc.deadline@gmail.com.

Further questions or comments can be sent to het.postdoc.deadline@gmail.com.