

SBS guidelines for PIs on supporting career development for postdoctoral staff

In line with the University's Code of Practice for the Management and Career Development of Research Staff, PIs in SBS are responsible "not only for the direction and active management of research projects, but also for facilitating and actively supporting the career development of the individual researcher engaged on a project". This is important because postdoctoral researchers need to balance their role on a given project with their need to either progress within academia, developing an independent research career or progress a career outwith academia. These guidelines are designed to clarify the responsibilities of all post-doc managers within SBS. Any cases where the PI and post-doc cannot reach agreement about the areas below should be brought to the attention of the School management for final judgement.

I. Time commitment for career development activities

Following the University's Code of Practice, PIs are expected to "encourage individual researchers to spend adequate time on professional development as well as on the project". Current expectations from RCUK funders are that post-docs should be allowed at least 10 days per year to undertake activities associated with career development. This expectation holds regardless of whether the postdoc was planning to remain in academic research or not. A recent external review of the Concordat to support the career development of researchers, to which the University of Edinburgh is a signatory, recommended that "20% of a researcher's time should be allowed for developing independent research and skills". The University of Edinburgh is likely to support and sign the revised Concordat, and within SBS we expect managers to fully support career development activities in line with this time allocation. This includes time to pursue independent research, training courses, consultancy, visits to other institutions/groups, organising seminars or networking events, industry or policy placements, teaching, supervision, and other relevant activities.

II. Career development meetings

PIs should endeavour to have regular, high quality meetings with post-docs in which the career development plans and training possibilities of the post-doc are salient parts. Annual P&DR meetings between line managers and their staff are expected in which career development plans should be discussed, but post-docs should be able to request meetings with their PI where project goals and career progression are discussed both within the first 3 months of starting in a position and at any point in the last 12 months of their contract. The PI is expected to organise such a meeting in a timely fashion.

III. External support

PIs are expected to be aware of and encourage post-docs to engage with training opportunities and career advisor support available within the University, and should encourage post-docs in need of more information to contact one of the school's Post-Doctoral Advisors (PDAs) for further guidance or refer to the webpages here: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/biology/groups/school-of-biological-sciences-postdoctoral-research>

IV. Teaching and supervision experience

PIs should actively encourage post-docs to take on formal supervisory and teaching roles, and ensure they get formal recognition of those roles for their CV. Post-docs can be formal primary supervisors on honours projects (as long as their PI is prepared to oversee the project and assist with marking) and this should be encouraged when post-docs do most of the supervisory work. Post-docs can be formal members of the supervisor committee of PhD students (although not first or second supervisor, nor committee chair) and this should be encouraged when post-docs play an important role in PhD student supervision. Post-docs interested in gaining teaching experience should be encouraged to contact the BTO for options.

V. Flexible working

Any post-doc has the right to request flexible working. Such requests should be considered fairly and, within reason and within funder's terms, be accepted.