

GUIDELINES FOR CAREER PLANNING FOR RESEARCH STAFF

Devising Professional Development Plans

This document outlines the key elements of the UCC system for professional development planning for research staff. Table 1 below summarises key timelines, actions and responsibilities in this process for Year 1 of a research contract.

Table 1: Stages in the Researcher Personal and Development Planning Process in Year 1 after appointment on a research contract		
Month	Action	Responsibility
1-2	Induction Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University and Departmental Induction Training 	PI/Postdoc/HR
1-2	Researcher Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct self-assessment of training and development needs. • Identify goals and objectives. • Explore opportunities for development. • Prepare Professional Development Plan (PDP) and forward to the PI for review. 	Postdoc
1-2	PI Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review researchers PDP. • Arrange first meeting with researcher to discuss and agree the PDP, normally for 1 year in first instance or for the duration of contract if shorter. • Written record of PDP agreed. 	PI/Postdoc
3-6	Planning and implementation phase <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PI and researcher meet to discuss performance and progress and to highlight any difficulties. • Researcher implements development plan. 	PI/Postdoc
6-9	Review and Feedback phase <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PI and researcher meet again to review progress. • Researcher implements development plan. 	Pi/Postdoc
9-12	Final Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final meeting between the researcher and the PI to review progress, give feedback and record any closing comments. 	PI/Postdoc

Stage 1 – Researcher Preparation

Self-Assessment

The researcher should conduct a self-assessment against their job description and intended career path to identify their training and professional development needs as follows:

Clarifying Professional Development Goals and Objectives

Professional development needs will differ depending on a researcher's previous experience, requirements of the current research position, and future career aspirations. Consequently, identified training needs will be influenced by the same factors.

It is critical that PI's recognise that all of the above are valid factors to consider in development of a PDP for an individual researcher.

When assessing training needs, a researcher needs to keep a balance between

- The skills they need for their current research responsibilities
- Their career aspirations

Undertaking a Training Needs Analysis

The recognised best practice for identifying training needs is the use of Training needs Analysis (TNA) to ascertain the existing skills and future training requirements of the researcher, taking account of their previous experience.

To perform a TNA, a researcher should:

- Identify what knowledge, skills, and/or understanding they need to acquire, in order to perform their functions for the role they currently hold.
- Measure what knowledge, skills and/or understanding they currently possess.
- Compare the findings and identify resulting gaps.

It is recommended that the researcher commits to up to 2-3 specific development goals over a 12 month period, (see appendix 1 research Skills development categories and Training Paths).

The following questions may be useful for a researcher in conducting a TNA.

	Where you are now	Where you want to go
Own views	ABILITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where have you been most successful? • What skills have contributed to that success? • Where have you been least successful? • What additional skills would have been helpful for you? • In what areas are you most likely to offer expertise to others? • Based on feedback and your own perceptions how do you measure up against the job description or research skills development categories? 	GOALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your most important goals, values and interests? • What do you want to do that you are not doing? • In what ways do you want to contribute in your current role and in your future career path? • What do you hope to accomplish? • What gives you the greatest sense of satisfaction and reward? • Where do you want to focus your attention based on your career direction
Others' views	PERCEPTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on feedback from others, how do you think others see you? • What do others say concerning your strengths and development needs? • What is your reputation with different groups in this and/or previous institutions? • What feedback have you received that you disagree with? 	STANDARDS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the criteria for success in your current position? • What expectations are placed on you by your PI, colleagues and others? • What will others value most from you?

As a result of such analysis, a researcher should now have a clearer picture of the skills or knowledge they will need to acquire, update or improve.

Identification of Development Options

The following are examples of professional development options available for researchers in UCC which may be utilised as means of addressing identified skills gaps.

- Acquisition of skills through day-to-day research activities in UCC or elsewhere
- Attending training events and development workshops
- Attending talks, workshops, conferences
- Presenting to peers
- Networking both internally and externally
- Getting involved in or leading a new/different aspect of the research project
- Gathering regular feedback from peers, PI and others
- One-to-one mentoring

Completion of draft PDP

Once the researcher has completed their draft PDP, they forward a copy to their PI. The document for recording the proposed professional development needs and goals is a professional Development Plan (PDP), for which UCC has its own template. An example of a completed PDP is documented below. Once the outcome from the TNA is recorded in the form of a draft PDP, it must be forwarded to the PI for review and discussion.

Stage 2 – PI Preparation

The PI will receive and review the draft PDP and then organise a specific meeting with the researcher to finalise the PDP; this should occur within two months from the date of appointment. It is the PI's responsibility to schedule this meeting with the researcher. The objective of this meeting is to finalise the PDP and to ensure that both parties are committed to implementing it. The meeting is also an opportunity to discuss and assess any obstacles which might prevent implementation of the plan.

The draft PDP will have identified the intended route through which professional development needs can be met and will have identified appropriate timelines. Once, finalised, the responsibility for implementing the plan remains with the researcher, and the role of the PI is to support the researcher, facilitate the researcher in terms of the time required for their professional development, and to give on-going advice on the PDP in terms of specific needs (e.g. related to the specific project-related skills needs).

The template for the PDP enables the researcher to record achievement of development goals. This document needs to be kept up-to-date to enable review and feedback on an on-going basis.

Research Skills Development Categories and Professional training Paths

Category	Research Skills Sub-categories	Formal development route	Informal development route
1. Professional Research Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop entitled 'Effective Presentation Skills'. • 'Speak confidently workshops' coordinated by Counselling and Development Unit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection on feedback and experience of making presentations, especially at international conferences.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics and good research conduct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Epigeum Module on Ethics in Research (due to be available mid-2012). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in preparation of an ethical approval form for a research project.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical Analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical techniques courses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Management Tools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop on project management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samples of application of modern project management tools (e.g., GANNT charts) in own research.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Safety Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University Health and Safety Training Courses coordinated by Health and Safety Training Unit. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lab Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the job training as part of the Post-doctoral training and development. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical Skills/Discipline related skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the job training as part of the Post-doctoral training and development 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing, Editing and Publishing -Introduction to and Advanced Academic Writing • Editorship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop entitled 'Research Process and Effective Communication-from Grant Proposal to Research Publication'. • Workshop on academic writing and publishing (Introduction and Advanced). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring postgraduate students in developing writing skills (e.g., organisation of PhD student journal clubs or writing circles). • Publication of own research • Experience as editor (or other management role) in a UCC postgraduate student journal. • Experience acting as a reviewer for international journals.

Category	Research Skills Sub-categories	Formal development route	Informal development route
1. Professional Research Skills (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Grantmanship and Financial Management.</u> -Applying for research grants -Financial grant management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at workshops coordinated through Office of VP for Research and Innovation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of applying for research funding either as part of a team or by securing independent research funding.
2. Personal Effectiveness and Career Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time& Priority management. • Career planning. • Personal effectiveness. • Mentoring. • Managing a team. • Resolving difficulties. • Negotiation skills. • Conducting effective meetings. • Dealing with the media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at workshops co-ordinated through Department of Human Resources and the Careers Service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection on career development activities. • Applications for posts and reflection on outcomes
3. Teaching and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective Lecturing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at workshop 'Teaching and Learning Skills' (5 x 2 hour sessions in 2012'). • Recorded lecture or tutorial hours on recognised UCC module. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal feedback and reflection on teaching of groups or research students.
4. Innovation, Commercial & Industry Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology and Patenting • Industry led workshops • Introduction to and advanced IPR & Copyright • Networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at workshops coordinated by Technology Transfer • Sessions organised by Careers Services • Workshop to be developed by HR 	

Template for Professional Development Plan - UCC

Category	Research Skills Sub-categories	Formal development route	Informal development route
1. Professional Research Skills			
2. Personal Effectiveness and Career Development			
3. Teaching and Learning			
4. Innovation, Commercial & Industry Skills			