IRISH UNIVERSITIES ASSOCIATION

Researcher

Career Development
and Employment Framework

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IRISH UNIVERSITIES ASSOCIATION

Introduction

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The development of human resources is a critical factor in reaping economic and social rewards from investment in research. Much progress has been made in this area but some key issues remain to be tackled. These include the lack of a structured progression for researchers in academia, unclear pathways to exiting academic employment, and varying levels of learning and development opportunities and careers advisory services across the sector.

These deficiencies militate against achievement of the national policy objective to optimise expertise in our research system and also limit researchers in planning and pursuing their chosen careers.

Innovation 2020, the national science and innovation strategy, includes an Action (No. 3.10), to "Develop a coherent national policy on structured progression for researchers". The Researcher Career Development and Employment Framework aims to deliver on this national policy action.

The Framework should be regarded as an overarching policy framework to be adopted within HEI policies and procedures. The IUA is committed to working with all stakeholders to fully implement the Framework and thereby underpin career development and progression for our valued researchers.

The researcher
ecosystem

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2. The researcher ecosystem

The ecosystem includes PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, research fellows, and principal investigators, complemented by a range of staff in administrative, technical and research support roles. The structure of this ecosystem is complex, with pathways (via people, ideas and expertise) to and from Higher Education institutions (HEIs) into industry and other non-academic sectors, partner HEIs, EU and non-EU countries, as well as interactions with multiple funding agencies. It spans research throughout the economy and society and the various public and private research performers.

This Framework sets out principles, policies and guidelines for the employment of researchers, adapted to this complex ecosystem, enabling HEIs to work together through the recruitment and contractual phases to enable easier operational processes between the HEIs, and with external partners, including Government and funders, and presenting Ireland's clear career proposition to internationally mobile researchers.
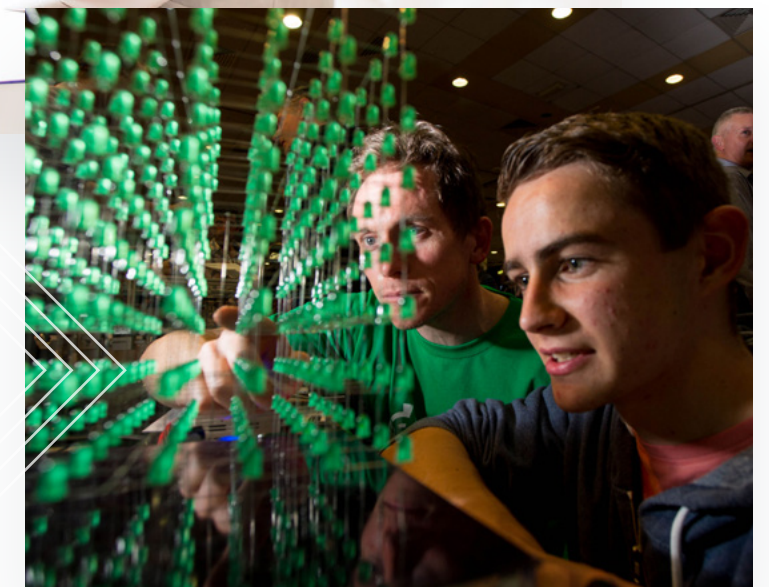
Overarching
3 principles

3. Overarching principles

A small number of overarching principles underpin the framework as follows:

- The Framework covers, recruitment, training, mobile career development and employment, including future employment opportunities.

- The publicly funded research system and HEIs in particular need to maintain a position at the forefront of discovery. The ongoing renewal of the researcher pipeline through the provision of development opportunities is intrinsic to this.

- In furtherance of the objectives of the European Charter for Researchers, and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, this framework recognises that nationally and internationally the majority of HEI researchers will ultimately continue their careers outside the HEI.[1] Its' purpose therefore is to prepare those entering the framework for a variety of careers in the public and private sector in research and non-research roles.

- The Career Development Framework is based on an Employee Life Cycle model recognising the significance of HR tools such as job descriptions and competency models from pre recruitment through to development stages, and recognising the need to incorporate the Open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) principles of the Charter and Code in the recruitment of researchers.

- The framework recognises that the research career is predominantly a competitive one and that competition for funding and employment contracts is intrinsic to it. It therefore contains key stages of progression where certain standards must be reached in order to progress further. In this context, tenured positions in academia represent the minority outcome for those who commence as post-doctoral researchers.

- In consequence of this, the framework has a strong competence development component aimed at providing postdoctoral researchers with the skills necessary to advance their careers both within and outside of academia.

- The overall approach to competence development and employment recognises that there is currently a gender imbalance in research and academic employment generally, and this will be tackled in the first instance through progression towards Athena SWAN certification, and through the measures in relation to grading, pay determination, funding of social employment costs, and development proposed within the employment and careers framework. It is recognised that HEIs and funding agencies are taking actions to promote gender equality, and this Framework seeks to complement gender equality objectives.

- Within the HEI setting, teaching and research are primary components of the academic mission, and are therefore intrinsically linked. The European Charter regards Teaching as an essential means for the structuring and dissemination of knowledge and therefore considers it a valuable option within the researchers' career paths. Reference to teaching within the framework is subject to the overarching principle of offering researchers development opportunities, mindful that teaching responsibilities should not be excessive and should not prevent researchers from carrying out their research activities

Overarching principles

[1] A) "The Scientific Century: Securing our future prosperity", The Royal Society, UK, 2010. https://royalsociety.org/~/media/Royal_Society_Content/policy/publications/2010/4294970126.pdf B) "What do researchers want to do? The career intentions of doctoral researchers", VITAE, UK (2012).

Scope of
4 Framework

What roles are covered

4. Scope of Framework –
## What roles are covered

Within the wider range of roles in the research ecosystem, a number of specific roles form part of the framework.

The first stage[2] of a research career is the PhD, doctoral training stage. The PhD stage is not included in the grading and salary structure set out in this Framework as it is not typically a salaried employment. However, as a fundamental stage of the Research Career, the PhD stage is recognised and incorporated within the developmental aspect of the broader Researcher Career Development and Employment Framework. This is addressed in specific detail in section 5.

The second and third stages of the Research Career, corresponding to the European Commission Framework for Research Careers, Level 2 (Recognised Researcher) and Level 3 (Established Researcher), are Post-Doctoral researchers 1 and 2, and Research Fellow respectively. The Job Title and Purpose, contract arrangements, and salary scales for these roles are outlined in the grading and salary structure tabulated in this paper. Typical job descriptions, and competency descriptions are covered in section 7. The majority of Researcher employment will be at these levels, and these grades are a primary focus for the recruitment and development proposals in this Framework paper.

The final stage of the Research Career, Level 4 of the EC Framework (Leading Researcher), is the Senior Research Fellow. Senior Research Fellow appointments are not HEI academic appointments.

The paper also considers roles which support research or what might be termed "infrastructural" roles. The more common of these is Research Assistant, and this is included in the salary and grading proposal.

Scope of Framework
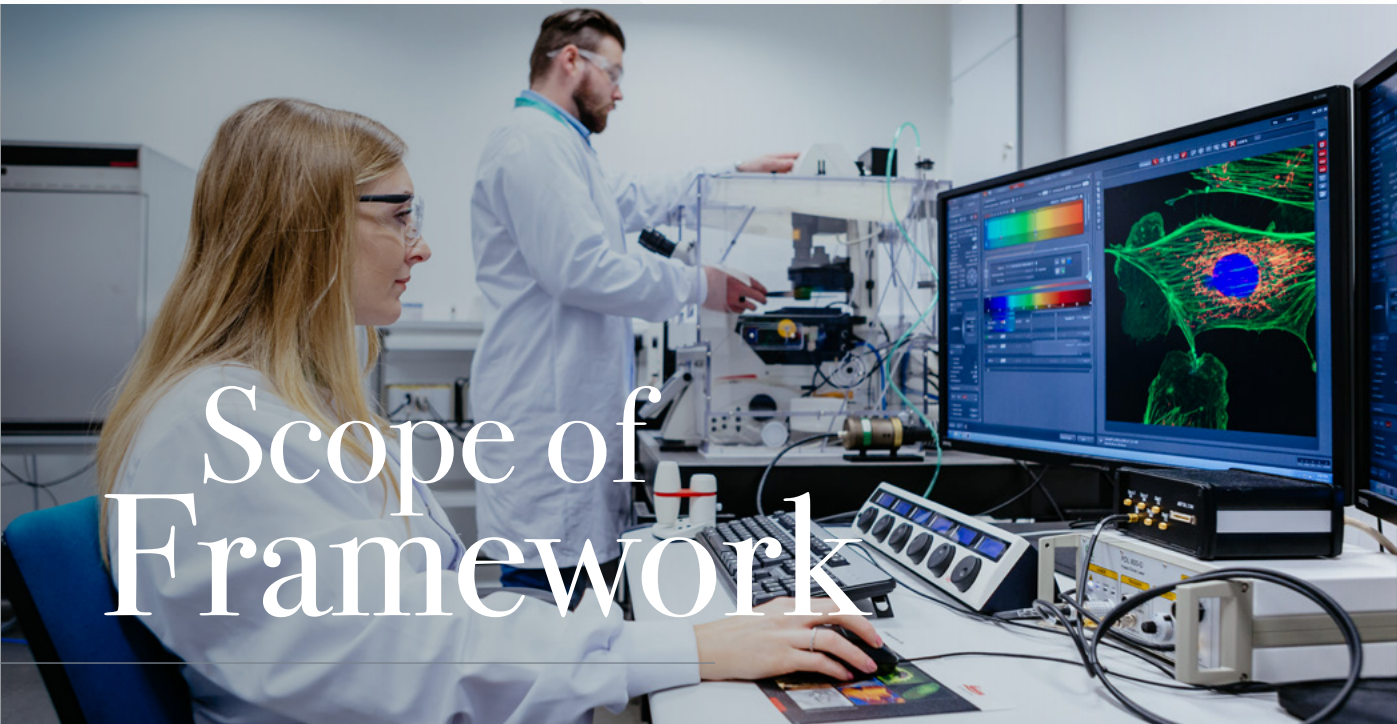
Researcher Ecosystem	Researcher Career Development and Employment Framework	
	Career Development Framework	Salary and Grading Structure
PhD Student	PhD Student	
Postdoctoral Researcher (1 & 2)	Postdoctoral Researcher (1 & 2)	Postdoctoral Researcher (1 & 2)
Research Fellow	Research Fellow	Research Fellow
Senior Research Fellow	Senior Research Fellow	Senior Research Fellow
Research Assistant		Research Assistant
Research Officer		Research Officer

[2] In exceptional circumstances, in line with institutional requirements and policies, an individual may be appointed to a Research Position on the basis of relevant professional experience in lieu of a PhD. .

PhD Students
(Level 1)

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5. PhD Students (Level 1)

Doctoral education programmes in Ireland educate and develop researchers to the highest skills levels so that they develop further as creative, critical and independent individuals who will advance the boundaries of knowledge. The core principles of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030[3] are embedded in the National Framework for Doctoral Education[4], which underpins excellence in all forms of doctoral education in Ireland. It provides a set of principles for doctoral education, while recognising the diversity in the Irish higher education system. It is consistent with European and international standards, principles and guidelines, including, for example, the Salzburg principles, the Salzburg II recommendations and the Principles for Innovative Doctoral training[5].

While the core and essential component of doctoral education remains the advancement of knowledge through original research, students are provided with opportunities to develop a range of skills to a very advanced level (not only in areas related to the research process itself but also to broader professional training and development). The National Framework for Doctoral Education formally endorses the following skills and attributes as key educational objectives for all graduates of Irish doctoral programmes:

- research skills and awareness;
- ethics and social understanding;
- communication skills;
- personal effectiveness/development;
- team-working and leadership;
- career management;
- entrepreneurship and innovation.

The significant focus on researcher career development and the development of transferable skills, which are initiated at PhD stage, should form the basis for a continuum of learning and development throughout the developmental phases outlined in the Research Career Development and Employment Framework.

[3] Department of Education and Skills, National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (2011).
[4] National Framework for Doctoral Education (2015).
[5] European University Association, Salzburg Principles (2005) and Salzburg II Principles (2010); European Commission, Principles for Innovative Doctoral training (2011).

PhD Students

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Researcher Employment (Level 2 - 4)

6. Researcher Employment (Levels 2-4)

The Researcher Career Development Framework is primarily focussed on Post-Doctoral Researcher and Research Fellow roles, and to a lesser extent Senior Research Fellow roles, all of which are established within the HEIs under contracts of employment.

These roles equate to levels 2-4 of the European Commission Framework for Research Careers.

6.1 Remuneration - Grading and Salary Structure

The Legislative Position

In the absence of formal centrally established salary scales, the IUA has published advisory researcher salary scales, which have been endorsed by the relevant agencies responsible for allocating competitive research funding in Ireland.

Developing Salary Proposals

Equal pay for equal work is an important principle. In framing this Framework proposal, it is the view of the HEIs that all research funders, whether public or private, national or international, should ensure that the level of funding is aligned with the proposed salary framework in order to reflect this important principle in researcher employment practice.

Implicit in the proposal is that pay progression is through annual incremental progression on the scales, and this has been captured in funding/budgeting policy.

The current salary scales for Researcher grades will be maintained on the IUA website. These scales have been approved by funding agencies, and are the de facto salary scales to be used by universities when hiring researchers.

Researcher Support Grades

Job Title	Grading Structure	Class of Contract
Post-Doctoral Researcher (0-4yrs or 0-6yrs) PD 1 PD2	**Purpose of Role:** to conduct a specified programme of research under supervision of a PI while developing skills and competencies with respect to the role and future career options. **Purpose of Role:** to conduct a specified programme of research under supervision of a PI while also supervising PhD students and PD1s. Continuing to develop skills and competencies with respect to the role and future career options	Specific Purpose (Research) Contract with a maximum term to meet the objectives of the scheme (up to 6yrs
Research Fellow	**Purpose of Role:** Design and implement a specific research programme/s in association with a PI. This role is a prestigious role which represents a step change from Post-Doctoral researcher roles.	Specific Purpose Contract
Senior Research Fellow	**Purpose of Role:** This role reflects the EU Framework Level 4 role of 'Leading Researcher', which is described as: "a researcher leading their research area or field. It would include the team leader of a research group ... In particular disciplines as an exception, leading researchers may include individuals who operate as lone researchers". This is not an academic appointment.	Specific Purpose Contract
RA - Research Assistant	**Purpose of the role:** to assist in the performance of research. This is a support role which is not part of the hierarchical structure.	Generally Specific purpose contract – fixed term but may accrue a CID upon having completed the necessary service.
RS - Research Officer	**Purpose of role:** appointed to the academic unit to support and engage the practical conduct of research as part of a research team. Role Profile • PhD Qualified or relevant industrial experience. • Conducts research as part of a research team. • Works on a specific project or projects. • Aids in long term continuity of research knowledge /techniques within research groups and academic departments. • Not seeking career as post-doctoral researcher or research fellow or academic.	Fixed term or Indefinite contract –

Researcher Career Development Framework

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7. Researcher Career Development Framework

The Researcher Career policy approach and the consequential supporting HR practices and processes have been developed in the context of the general principles applicable to the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers, as well as of employers and/or funders, which are set out in the European Charter for Researchers & the Code of Conduct for their Recruitment (the "Charter and Code"), and including Open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R.)

The Researcher Career Development Framework therefore, is structured around the key stages of the researcher employee life cycle, as follows;

1. Pre Recruitment
2. Recruitment
3. Pre-employment and contracting
4. Orientation
5. Professional and Career Development
6. Progression
7. Termination

7.1 Pre-Recruitment

The process of formally establishing, describing and advertising a research position are necessary prerequisites to the recruitment process, and are set out in this section.

a. Position approval

As researchers become employees of the HEI, researcher positions must be formally established within the relevant academic unit through the HEIs' job requisition process, which will include;

- ✓ appropriate sign off by the delegated authority, and
- ✓ considered decision making in relation to the level/grade of the role.

In limited circumstances approval may be sought for contract renewals. These circumstances will be set out in strict institutional guidelines, e.g. to complete a level on the framework; where a no cost extension has been received etc.

b. Job Descriptions

The HEIs have developed a set of common general job descriptions for researcher grade positions. The job descriptions are template based, and set out the job purpose and position summary, along with the principal duties and responsibilities, and a generalised person specification upon which recruitment and selection decisions will be based.

It is envisaged, that in practice, the standard job description will adequately cover approximately 90% of the required content, which may be supplemented by the university, as required, through the addition of role-specific content.

c. Advertising of vacancies

One of the core principles of the European Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers is open competition. On that basis, and to maximise equality of opportunity, advertising of researcher positions for open competition is mandatory .

Advertised researcher positions will remain open for applications normally for 2 weeks, and at a minimum, for a period of one week in duration. (In certain situations, where further vacancies are anticipated in the short term, a panel may be formed which may be drawn down when a suitable vacancy becomes available). Researcher Job advertisements will be placed on HEI websites, on http://www.universityvacancies.com (the Irish HEIs' shared jobs board), and the Euraxess jobs portal. In addition, institutions may elect to advertise vacancies in additional sites and/or publications as appropriate.

d. Derogation:

An exceptions or derogations policy may be considered at HEI level in the following circumstances;

I. As per the OTMR, where the researcher is named in the grant application, employers may generally accept that the peer-review process associated with the grant application is a sufficient test. Such appointments, though not advertised, would still require an internal verification process in the HEI. This derogation may not be used for appointment of a Post Doc entering employment for the first time, and is typically used for progression from PD1 to PD2.

II. Where a researcher has secured independent research funding or research fellowship in their own right.

III. For short term appointment (circa 6 months).

A core principle of OTM-R is that the process itself is transparent and the process to be followed for any researcher appointment will be made known to the applicants.

7.2 Recruitment

The Irish HEIs Researcher recruitment model is designed in the context of the Researcher Career Development framework, and in furtherance of the objectives of the Charter and Code. The HEI will generally notify candidates of the detail of the recruitment competition as part of the advertised documentation.

Typically, the methods listed hereunder will be utilised, with the integrity of the process underpinned by the use of objective criteria and the recording of the basis of any decisions.

1. Pre-screening to check eligibility

2. Shortlisting of candidates for interviews

3. Interview

Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed by the appropriately constituted Selection Committee.

a) Selection Committees
The selection committee will be independent and objective, make best practicable use of the expertise of external members and its composition should be appropriately diverse. Selection committees will carry out their function independently and objectively.

b) Selection Criteria
Evaluation criteria will be consistent with the requirements of the position.

c) Outcomes
The basis of the selection decision and any supporting evidence must be documented. Interviewed applicants may receive feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their application.

4. Complaints procedure
In line with the recommendations of the OTM-R Report, HEIs will facilitate complaints in relation to the application of the OTM-R procedures. The scope of the complaints procedure is in relation to the failure of the HEI or appointed selection committee to follow the terms of the HEI's recruitment procedures.

Complaints may be made to the HEI Director of Human Resources, who may delegate the complaint to a senior HR Manager to review and determine the issue.

7.3 Pre-employment and contracting

a. Pre-employment Checks
Appointment of researchers who have been recommended for appointment following interview, will be subject to a number of standard pre-employment checks in line with institutional HR practice.
These may include Medical screening, as well as reference and qualifications checks.

b. Contracts of Employment
Appointment will be to fixed term specific purpose contracts for Post-Doctoral Researchers and Research fellows in accordance with the level of the position in the Researcher Salary and Grading Structure.

For Post-Doctoral Researchers the role purpose will be defined as a professional development role and the professional development will be completed within the period of the contract which is issued. HEIs will endeavour to offer a contract for the longest duration possible relative to the actual need and/ or the term of the project, subject to funding.

The objective grounds for the offer of fixed term appointments, which will be reflected in contracts of employment, is as follows;

This is a professional training and development role and the training and development relevant to this position will be completed within the period of the contract. It is a legitimate objective of the HEI to provide Post-doctoral Research training opportunities which are of limited duration. This will allow for the progression over many years, of post-doctoral researchers through the Post –doctoral Training Programme as part of the HEI's Employment & Career Development Framework for Researchers providing intergenerational training in the methods and practice of research and scholarship.

The objective grounds for the issue of this fixed term contract rather than a permanent contract is in keeping with the foregoing legitimate objectives of the HEI.

c. Work permits and Hosting Agreements
The HEIs operate a policy of strict compliance with current employment legislation; specifically, the Employments Permit Act 2003. It is currently an offence under this Act for either a HEI Employer or employee (if a non-EEA national) to engage in an employment-based relationship within the HEIs without previously having acquired appropriate authorisation to do so.

The Irish Universities Association (IUA) hosts the EURAXESS Ireland help-desk which provides free advice and tailored assistance to mobile researchers and their families on administrative, working and cultural matters including immigration, residency and work permits

d. Salary
I. Starting Pay
Appointment of Researchers will be on to the salary scale applicable to their research grade, as set out in Section 6 of this Framework.

In relation to starting pay for researchers, appointment to the minimum point on the relevant scale range is the default policy position, in line with government policy.

II. Pay Progression
Annual pay progression will be subject to satisfactory performance and in line with funding budget policy, which will incorporate the basis of progression (normally by way of incremental steps) and confirmation of funding.

e. Formal appointment
Following acceptance of appointment by the successful candidate, the researcher is formally appointed onto the staff of the HEI in line with standard nomination and appointment processes of the HEI.

7.4 Orientation

As the researcher is participating in a structured Professional Development programme at PD 1 and PD2 level, and is still at a relatively early career stage as a Research Fellow, it is important that the Researcher is facilitated with a clear and structured orientation programme so that they are enabled to contribute effectively to the research team or department, and to maximise their professional and career development from the research opportunity as early as possible in their appointment.

The objective of the orientation process is to ensure that there is a seamless progression from day one welcome and settling in, through to delivering on project objectives, and on to short, medium and long-term career development planning.

7.5 Professional and Career Development

In the context of this framework, the HEIs are committed to creating an environment that supports and facilitates researchers in progressing their own professional and career development as part of a structured continuum of development post-Ph.D.

Accordingly, as early as possible after their appointment, the Researcher is provided with the relevant information and tools which are designed to;

» Outline and explain the detail of the career development framework and process;

» Introduce the Researcher to the Core Competencies which are a foundation for Development Planning;

» Outline the career development planning process, their role, and the role of the Principal Investigator in the process;

» Provide template documentation for self-assessment, objective setting, and planning;

» Outline the development opportunities that will be made available, and;

» Clarify the level of development goals expected to be achieved, and how these will be documented.

In broad terms, in addition to day to day interaction which involves guidance, support and instruction between a PI and Researcher, the formal Career Development Planning process, which is owned by the Researcher, and supported by the Principal Investigator, would follow the typical format set out in Table 1 below. This process is described in more detail in section 5.3.1.

Table 1. Career Development Planning Process		
Step 1 Complete Self-Assessment	**Step 2** Plan & Implement	**Step 3** Review & Feedback
• Clarify goals and identify needs • Explore development options available • Discuss self-assessment – Researcher & PI/Mentor	• Meeting to discuss and agree Development Plan • Record outcomes of the meeting • Researcher should review and request training and development opportunities (refer to (Appendix 15). • Agree date for next meeting to review progress	• Meet to review progress since last meeting • Evaluate Progress • Update/amend plan where appropriate

5.1 Probation

Researchers will fulfil a probationary period within the first year of appointment with the Institution, and in this time the Researcher will be required to demonstrate their suitability to continued employment under the terms of their contract.

5.2 Competencies

There is increasing recognition of the importance of Researchers developing a portfolio of transferable skills so that they have the flexibility to pursue successful careers beyond academia, in industry, the community and voluntary sector, public administration, or elsewhere.
Universities will align with a set of competencies to underpin all phases of the career development program from recruitment through to career planning, and there are already examples of good practice in this regard across a number of Irish HEIs.

5.3 Managing Personal Development Planning

A post-doctoral researcher appointment offers researchers the opportunity and the framework to engage in research, teaching opportunities and career development. In this context a high degree of self-direction is expected of the Post-Doctoral researcher in their training and development, and career planning.

5.3.1 The Development Planning Process

The Planning Process takes place between the Principal Investigator/Head of Unit and the PD Researcher. The formal process takes place on an annual basis with the first planning session taking place after initial induction, and usually not later than three months from the researcher commencing their employment in the HEI.

The stages in the process will incorporate;

- Researcher preparation which includes, 1) Self-Assessment, 2) Identification of development goals and needs, and 3) Consideration of potential development options by the researcher;

- Planning phase, which will involve meeting(s) between the Principal Investigator/Head of Unit and the researcher to discuss and agree the development plan.

- Implementation of the development plan, which will involve completion of the agreed development interventions, and maintaining a record of same;

- Review and Feedback loop, where the Researcher and Principal Investigator/Head of Unit meet formally to review and confirm progress, and to update the plan as appropriate;

- End of Contract Final Review – to confirm that project deliverables and on the job research skills have been achieved (as part of Outcome Certification 5.3.4 below) along with supporting feedback, and to provide insights in relation to future career opportunities.

5.3.2 Core curriculum

Each HEI will offer a core curriculum of skills and knowledge development, usually based on the competency model. This curriculum will comprise elective modules covering both, skills to advance competence as a researcher, and transferrable skills to enhance overall employability.

5.3.3 Protected Time

In order to commit fully to the success of the model, protected time for researcher professional development is essential.

5.3.4 Certifying Development Outcomes

Each HEI will adopt a standard approach whereby the Researcher must record a certain number of development activities annually, in order to achieve a target level of development.

5.3.5 Role of the Researcher, the PI, and others.

Fundamentally the researcher must take ownership of the planning and management of their career using the facilities provided by the HEI.

The primary role of the PI, in relation to research and professional development, is to develop the core research skills of the researcher, through the provision of opportunity within the research team or department, and through feedback and guidance.

Ideally advice in relation to job search activity and employability will be provided by a dedicated researcher careers service attached to the HEI Careers, Research Administration, or Human Resources functions.

It is expected that researchers will also benefit from the expertise of PIs, other than their direct line manager, who may participate in seminars, lectures or master classes specifically organised for researchers which would cover topics such as grant writing and submission, publication and outreach, commercialisation, and teaching.

7.6 Progression

Progression within the researcher careers framework from PD1 to PD 2 will normally be through open competition.

However, progression from PD1 to PD2 without open competition may occur where a Post Doc is on a contract supported by 3-4-year funding. In that instance, they may be eligible to apply for PD2 after 2 years' service, subject to performance and funding. Such applications will be considered through the HEI's internal progression process.

Progression from PD to Research Fellow may be by way of open competition or merit based internal progression.

In relation to the latter, (a) where a researcher has secured independent research funding in their own right a researcher may be considered to have completed their post-doctoral development objectives and may be appointed as a Research Fellow, subject to the HEI's internal appointment process, or (b) where a researcher has achieved a level of attainment that meets standards specified by the HEI, the researcher may make application for appointment as a Research Fellow, subject to the HEI's internal appointment process, which shall also consider the availability of funding.

Achievement of the expected progression within PD 1 and PD 2 is transferable between the seven Irish HEIs. This can be reflected in the starting pay of a PD researcher. Similarly, as the PD scheme is an intergenerational training scheme completion of PD1 or PD 2 levels in one Irish HEI will normally render that researcher ineligible for appointment at a similar level in another Irish HEI.

7.7 Termination

As postdoctoral appointments are fixed term and professional development appointments, it is important that the termination process is handled clearly and positively. The termination process will include;

- Interaction between HR and the Principal Investigator/Head of Unit to confirm contract end date and to arrange communication with the researcher.

- Timely communication to researcher of contract end date, and support options available to the researcher in that context.

- A Statement of Employment that confirms that the researcher has been employed in the HEI on the Researcher Development Programme.

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