Career Conversations with your PI

Online Resource
This document is intended to help you prepare for a career conversation with your Principal Investigator (PI) / Supervisor.

Structured meetings tend to be effective meetings so it’s important that you think about what you want from the meeting.

Are there specific goals that you want to achieve?

It can be useful to plan a meeting agenda so that your PI can gain a sense of the topics to discuss and what you want the meeting to focus on.
Preparation before the meeting: Key areas to think about

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<th>What are the elements of your postdoc that you enjoy the most?</th>
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<th>What do you enjoy the least?</th>
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Generate a list for each, being as specific as possible. Then take a look at the lists:
- Are there any themes?
- Could these align with a particular career?
- What would that career be?
Research these roles:

| What are the job requirements?  
(Make sure you know what these are, not just what you think they are – don’t rely on hearsay!) |  |
| What are the key skills required?  
(Can you find any job descriptions to generate a list of skills from?) |  |
| What would a typical day look like? |  |
| Where is the role located? |  |
| Think of your network  
(Do you know anyone who is in that role? If you don’t, do you have a contact who may be able to help? Take them for a coffee – ask them what they love/hate about their role.) |  |
| What achievements or experience will you need in your CV to secure a job with your preferred employer/s? |  |

You should be considering more than one career option, ideally you should have at least two options that you are interested in, so do the research into these roles too.
Questions to think about:

- Have you thought about what you want to achieve during your time in this post at Edinburgh?
- Have you looked at the IAD training brochure to identify development opportunities?
- What are your career goals for the next year?
- Have you made a Personal Development Plan? (The Open University have a short video that explains the Personal Development Planning process and highlights how it can be used).
- Have you taken responsibility for career planning (the Institute of Academic Development Careers Consultant can assist with career planning issues)?
- Have you assessed your skills development and set further goals?
- How can your supervisor help? Have you used any of your 10 days professional development allowance?
- Have you engaged with any training and development opportunities?
- Have you begun to develop and expand your networks (within/outside academia)?
- If you wish to stay within academia, are you aware of any opportunities?
- Have you made contact with the Edinburgh Research Office (ERO) regarding suitable funding opportunities that you might be eligible to apply for?
- Have you kept your CV up to date?
- Based on your research and what you have achieved so far, where are the gaps in your CV?
- What skills will you need to develop to improve your employability at the end of your postdoc contract?
- Where will you find development opportunities?
- How will your current contract help you achieve your plans?
- Who would it be helpful to talk to?
- How will you use your 10 days to fill the gaps?
- How soon do you want to organise a follow up meeting with your PI (be realistic)?
- Have you any questions that you haven’t been able to find the answer to?

Questions to ask your PI:

- Is it possible to undertake any additional responsibilities within your role? (teaching / supervision)
- Could you shadow a colleague to learn more about another area or specific research techniques?
- Can they provide clarification on areas for development?
- Are they aware of any conferences / beneficial training opportunities?
- Are they able to assist with providing a Mentor (professional contacts)? The university also runs a Mentoring Scheme – Mentoring Connections (Mentoring | The University of Edinburgh).
- Are they aware of any networks / societies that would be beneficial to attend or join?
- Have they reviewed your CV?
This resource was written by Eleanor Hennige, the IAD’s Research Staff Careers Consultant supporting fixed-term research staff at the University with their career planning and options. Eleanor runs our 1:1 career development consultations, she delivers our suite of career workshops and works with Schools/Research Staff Societies on career specific events and workshops. ResearchStaff.Careers@ed.ac.uk