Being a researcher in Edinburgh:

Beginning your Research Position in Edinburgh

"Transitioning from your PhD to your postdoc is simultaneously exciting and terrifying. Allow yourself to be terrified, and be wary of your health – both mental and physical – throughout. " (University of Edinburgh Postdoc)

Welcome

The aim of this guide is to help you transition to your research position at the University of Edinburgh. Working through this guide will allow you to reflect on your transition and explore what you want to achieve at the University.

Introduction

Transitioning to a new role is not restricted to learning specific information; each journey is unique and may take a long time. This guide has been written as a result of listening to a selection of postdoctoral and research staff working across the University of Edinburgh.

This transition booklet is an accompanying resource to help you settle into your position. It is important that you also read the University's Code of Practice for the Management and Career Development of Research Staff, which outlines the responsibilities of the researcher, Principal Investigator (PI) and institution in a researcher's induction, project management and career development. The Code also highlights important regulations and procedures relevant to staff at the University of Edinburgh.

Also have a look at the Research Staff Hub - a website that supports the communication and coordination of the vast support available to all researchers at the University of Edinburgh, and those who support them

Who is this guide for?

This guide may be useful for all research staff moving to the University of Edinburgh, a term covering all non-tenured staff members conducting research at the University. This usually includes research assistants and associates, postdocs, and research/teaching fellows.

How can I make the most of this guide?

We encourage you to print off this document or complete it electronically. By completing the reflective exercises and referring back to them, you will identify whether you are developing and achieving your goals.

Practical Information

Living in Edinburgh

Relocation Support is an online resource by the University of Edinburgh containing practical information about moving to and living in Edinburgh. This covers topics including banking, accommodation, healthcare and childcare.

[Relocation Support](#)

Inductions

Inductions are available for all new staff at the University; whether you are completely new to the University of Edinburgh or if you have previously worked or studied here. These inductions will inform you about staff-specific services and information, as well as providing a space to network with other staff members.

- Human Resources have an online induction resource, containing information and support to support you in your new role, containing videos of staff talking about their experiences at the University.

  [Onboarding - Induction](#)

- Human Resources (HR) and the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) run 'New Staff Meet-Up' sessions where new staff can hear 'lightning talks' on their experiences of working at the University and network with other new staff

  [New Staff Meet-Up](#)

- The Research Staff Hub is a web space that brings together information from across the University to support research staff undertake their role, develop themselves and progress in their career. There is a section dedicated to Induction support,

  [Research Staff Hub—Induction](#)

- Your department/institute will run an induction, to inform you about discipline specific information.

- Your Principal Investigator (PI) will introduce you to your working environment and the project itself.

It is your responsibility to sign-up to the New Staff Meet-Up. All information about these will appear on the University's website. If you can't find information about your departmental induction, ask your PI.

Three steps to successfully transition into your postdoc

This model is based on the 5 element induction for successful transitions, designed and piloted for undergraduate students at the University of Edinburgh[1]

1	Learn about your working environment, principal investigator and institution
2	Reflect on your working strategies
3	Develop your skills and planning your career

[1] Shovlin, A. and McDonald, A. (2017) Five element induction model for personalised academic transitions. Enhancement Themes International Conference, Glasgow 6- 8th June 2017. Available at: http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/paper/8-1-1-five-element-induction-model-for-personalised-academic-transitions.pdf?sfvrsn=4

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Learning

The first stage in your transition involves learning about your new working environment, principal investigator and institution.

Working environment

A crucial element of your transition to your new position involves learning information. This will be covered in your inductions and your staff handbook.

Compare your new environment to what you expected. If your job in Edinburgh is not what you had expected, talk to your PI/peers or a mentor to help resolve any issues.

Do I have all of the information I need to do my job well? If not, who can I ask?

_____
_____
_____

Is my working environment similar to what I had expected?

_____
_____
_____

Principal Investigator (PI)

At the start of your postdoc position, it is important to discuss the expectations you have of the project, your career development and your time in Edinburgh. This will help both of you to align your expectations, set boundaries and learn about the other person.

You can use an expectations questionnaire to guide this conversation (attached to the end of this document). See the Code of Practice for further key points to cover.

What does my PI expect me to do and by when?

_____
_____
_____

What opportunities are available to help develop my career?

_____
_____
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Institution

Reviewing your academic orientation and learning about the University's expectations is crucial for you to succeed in your postdoc.

Learn about the opportunities and activities at the University. Getting involved in Communities and Networks will help you settle into the University and the city.
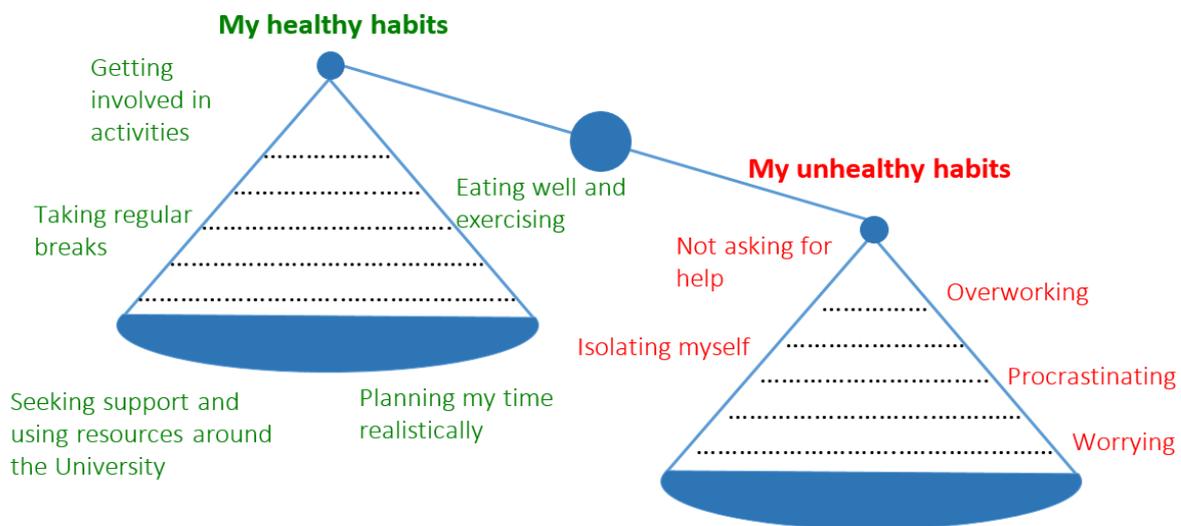
Have I read the University's Code of Practice?

Yes/No

How can I ensure that my research follows the Integrity and Misconduct policies of the University and the UK Research Integrity Office?

_____
_____
_____

Working

Starting a new job is a great opportunity to reflect on your previous approaches to work and to explore whether you can improve them.

Reflecting on your working habits

Use the scale below to reflect on your good and unhealthy working approaches. Circle any habits that apply to you and write any other habits on the dotted lines.

My healthy habits

Getting involved in activities

Taking regular breaks

Eating well and exercising

My unhealthy habits

Not asking for help

Overworking

Isolating myself

Procrastinating

Worrying

Seeking support and using resources around the University

Planning my time realistically

Strategies to improve your working habits:

- Get involved in activities or networks at the University
- Set firm goals about what to achieve and by when
- Reflect objectively about when you are working productively
- Using the Pomodoro Technique® allows you to work for 25 minutes and then take a 5 minute break, which is particularly useful when doing very demanding tasks.
- Ask for help early, so you do not waste time troubleshooting
- Realise that it is okay to say no if someone asks you to take on additional responsibilities

Support:

Staff Health and Wellbeing

"*Spending quality time away from my work caused my work to become much more effective. I spent less time working but the time I did spend on it was far more productive. In my haste to finish my PhD on time, I had forgotten about the importance of having something to look forward to outside of work*"

(Research Assistant in the School of Science and Engineering)

What actions can you take to prevent falling into unhealthy habits in your research position?

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_____

_____

_____

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Developing

From the beginning of your post-doc, start thinking about your goals and your next steps. Planning your career development early will allow you to get the most support from the University and to be the most competitive candidate when you move to your next position. The IAD has comprehensive guide designed to highlight key resources for career planning and the stage at which you might need them during your time at the University of Edinburgh.

You have a range of options available to you. Consider these options and evaluate whether they match your interests, values and skills. Answer the following questions to help you plan steps to get there:

Where do I want to be in 5 years?	How will I get there?	What activities would I like to pursue outside of work?
What do I want to achieve while in my postdoc?	Who can help me?	What options do I have if my current plan doesn't work out?

Consider what challenges you may face when you are working towards these goals

What obstacles may I face? How will I overcome them?

_____

_____

How will I maintain my resilience and well-being despite these challenges?

_____

_____

Support: IAD's Career Management Guide   The Vitae Researcher Development Framework

Careers Service

The University of Edinburgh is a member of Vitae. All staff members can gain access to the Vitae website by registering for free with your organisational email address.

Prospects Career Planner

www.ed.ac.uk/iad

This is a questionnaire you can use to align your expectations with your Principal Investigator (PI). Print off this page and either discuss each question together or fill in the questionnaire prior to the meeting ready to discuss. This does not replace the Code of Practice for the Management and Career Development of Research Staff.

University of Edinburgh
Expectations between a Postdoc and their Principal Investigator (PI)

Read each of the statements below and decide on your position for each. For example for number (1), if you believe strongly that it is the responsibility of the postdoc, circle '1' and if you believe strongly that it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator (PI) circle '5'. If you believe it is a joint responsibility, circle '3'.

Postdoc statement	Scale					PI statement
1. It is the responsibility of the postdoc to arrange meetings and rearrange missed meetings.	1	2	3	4	5	It is the responsibility of the PI to arrange meetings and rearrange missed meetings.
2. The postdoc should decide which theoretical framework and/or methodology is most appropriate for the project.	1	2	3	4	5	The PI should decide which theoretical framework and/or methodology is most appropriate for the project.
3. The postdoc should develop an appropriate program and timetable of research and study for the project.	1	2	3	4	5	The PI should develop an appropriate program and timetable of research and study for the project.
4. It is the postdoc's responsibility to ensure that she/he has located and access all relevant services and facilities for research.	1	2	3	4	5	The PI is responsible for ensuring that the postdoc has access to the appropriate services and facilities at the university.
5. Personal counselling and support are not the responsibility of the PI; the postdoc should look elsewhere.	1	2	3	4	5	The PI is responsible for providing emotional support and encouragement to the postdoc.
6. The postdoc should submit all drafts of written work and plans so that the PI can ensure they are on track.	1	2	3	4	5	The postdoc should only send the PI written work when it is polished and they are ready for feedback.
7. The postdoc can contact the PI (via email/telephone) anytime to ask questions and discuss academic progress.	1	2	3	4	5	The postdoc should wait for pre-planned meetings to ask questions and discuss academic progress.
8. The postdoc should work as many hours as required to get the work done to the highest standard.	1	2	3	4	5	The postdoc should not feel obliged to work overtime and should spend the remaining time relaxing.
9. The postdoc is able to spend time on career development (including funding applications, workshops and conferences).	1	2	3	4	5	The postdoc should spend the working week on the project; career development must take place in their own time.
10. The postdoc will be able to present research from the project at conferences/ publish paper(s).	1	2	3	4	5	The postdoc and PI will co-author papers. The postdoc cannot present the project/results at conferences.

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