

Every Researcher Counts

Resource B

Career conversations

B1 – Programme leader's manual

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As institutions review their policies to support a diverse research workforce, this may open up opportunities for research staff to benefit more from practices such as flexible working, career breaks and increased support with issues such as working with a disability and working in a second language. The provision of these resources can contribute to training Principal Investigators (PIs) in the diversity and equality principle of the Concordat (Principle 6), encouraging them to work with a diverse range of researcher staff within their group, where every researcher counts.

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Overview of the programme

This programme is one of three workshops in the series of resources supporting the understanding of equality and diversity issues amongst those who manage research staff within higher education institutions (HEIs).

The series includes:

Resource A – Team management: important conversations

Resource B – Career Conversations

Resource C – Using the Vitae Researcher Development Framework

The materials for each workshop are separate and standalone. They can be used to run one workshop or a series of three workshops and can be incorporated into other longer programmes for principal investigator development.

Why should participants come on this course? What's in it for them?

This course is aimed at existing (or potential) principal investigators with responsibility for the management of research grants and research staff. The reasons for attending are to:

- raise awareness of equality and diversity requirements in their role
- have the opportunity to discuss equality and diversity issues in the context of managing their teams
- share people management good practice with peers
- prepare for and enable discussions with research staff about wider work issues.

This course has been designed to help principal investigators understand their responsibilities towards their research staff with regard to equality and diversity. More generally, the course is part of the overall development of the principal investigator as a manager of others, looking at the attendant responsibilities and opportunities of the role.

Participants are likely to be extremely busy individuals so every activity chosen needs to be engaging and worthwhile. In order to tailor this material to their needs, you need to have a broad understanding of the daily life of a principal investigator/researcher in the specific institutional setting.

Learning objectives

There are three learning objectives for this session:

- Understanding the traditional/non-traditional career routes for researchers and placing equal value on careers in research and beyond research
- Having the opportunity to examine and discuss a range of career development strategies and career limiting strategies
- Reviewing personal practices in equality and diversity

Programme outline

This is a 90 minute workshop comprising four sections. It is designed for a group of 12-24 participants, working in smaller groups of 3-6 people.

The four sessions cover the following themes:

- What is a career these days? How does anyone develop it?
- Mapping the future for individual researchers
- Reviewing individual and departmental attitudes to equality and diversity

Resources

Paper and pen for each participant

Flipchart stand, minimum of one, and ideally one flipchart stand per 4 participants

Flipchart paper

Flipchart pens x12

PowerPoint Slides (B3)

Handouts (B2)

Three publications are referred to in this session. It would be useful to have at least one physical copy of these on the course. The following links can be provided to participants either during the session or in a follow-up email (or both).

Role model/case study material

Mothers in Science

64 ways to have it all

Royal Society

www.royalsociety.org/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=4294975307

Overview of good practice from one discipline

This reports good practice around equality and diversity in chemistry departments

Royal Society of Chemistry

Planning for Success

www.rsc.org/ScienceAndTechnology/Policy/Documents/PlanningforSuccess.asp

Broad guidance on equality and diversity issues in management within a higher education institution

Managing Fairly

Equality Challenge Unit

www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/files/managing-fairly.pdf/view

These materials are not directly linked to the programme content but they are useful to have as additional and supporting documentation, and for participants to follow up with after the course.

Room and layout

Room

A room that will:

- comfortably take the number of participants when seated in cabaret style, roughly double the space required for lecture style
- permit flexible working – pairs, fours, sixes, the whole course.

Layout

When participants arrive:

- tables with four to six chairs, to encourage discussion as people arrive.

During the course:

- ideally a very large room with fixed or heavy tables, or a smaller room with movable tables.

Timetable

Timings are indicative and can be changed by the programme leader to accommodate participant learning

Programme aim:

To provide participants with an overview of equality and diversity issues involved in managing research staff at different points in their career and consider different career formats to suit individual researchers, including careers beyond research.

TIME	ACTIVITY	FORMAT	CONTENT
Pre-course	Programme leader preparation		
Prior to T0	Participant arrival Tea and coffee available (as appropriate to the institution)		
T0 – T20	Introduction to the session	Plenary pairs	Personal introductions What is a career these days? How does anyone develop it? Debrief
T20 – T60	Mapping the future for individual researchers	Four groups of two to six people	Working out what the next 15 years of career might mean for up to 10 different researchers with diverse and individual backgrounds and plans.
T60 – T80	Reviewing individual and departmental attitudes to equality and diversity	Groups of three	Using the ECU material on 'managing fairly', a series of stimulus questions are used for individual reflection, group discussion and plenary follow-up.
T80 – T90	Action planning	Individual/pairs	An opportunity to reflect on three things: 1. What do I need to be better informed about and do differently? 2. What do I need to do differently when working with researchers in my team? 3. What do I need to do to influence my wider environment?
T90	Closing the course	Plenary	Recap of the programme and the main learning points.

Purpose

To help participants settle in

To give time for latecomers to join

To get the course started

To set a framework for the session

Process

Led by the programme leader

Discussion activities in pairs

Structure

Outline the purpose of the session 2-3 mins

Welcome and set the scene for what the course is and is not

Introduce self and establish credibility

Introduction and discussion of key questions 10 mins

Debrief of the discussions 7-8 mins

Resources

No resources required

Detail

Outline the purpose of the session 2-3 mins

Start the course by introducing yourself and your experience in relation to researcher career development, equality and diversity.

If you have some statistics from the institution relating to equality and diversity, you could show them as part of your introduction and use them to frame the themes of the course. It would be particularly useful if you had career management data to use as part of this introduction. Vitae's 'What do researchers do?' publications would be useful resources for this session. www.vitae.ac.uk/wdrd

The purpose of the session is to meet with other principal investigators in a similar situation, to discuss a range of issues related to helping research staff develop their careers in an environment that supports equality and diversity amongst its employees.

Take the opportunity to reinforce that, although principal investigators may not feel they are directly responsible for the career management of the researchers in their groups/teams, they can provide a pivotal guiding, helping and mentoring role in the research careers of their staff. Their own career management can often provide role model behaviours for other, less experienced, researchers.

Introduction and discussion of key questions 10 mins

Ask participants to break into pairs or groups of three and introduce themselves to each other. Explain that the purpose for this short introductory session is to start to explore some key questions.

The first question is:

What defines a career these days?

Give participants up to five minutes to discuss this question in pairs and then ask them to join with another pair to debate the second question. Reinforce that careers should be considered in both research and non-research environments and that careers for all may include periods of flexible working, part-time working and career breaks. Addressing the topic of how long a career is and what age individuals expect to work until themselves and how long they expect members of their teams to work until can assist a discussion on age related issues in the workplace.

How does anyone develop their career?

Give participants a further ten or so minutes to discuss this question and ask them to note down the top five activities that they see as being career developing. If a prompt is required, ask the principal investigators to present what they have done to develop their careers, and what they are doing at the moment.

Debrief of the discussions

You have five to ten minutes to debrief these discussions. It may be useful to capture participants' responses to these questions on a flipchart at the front, to be able to refer to as the session continues or for you to note specific institution-related points.

Some points you may cover in the debrief:

- The notion of a 'traditional career' is changing. Skills and experience acquired in each period of our employment or each sector of our work can be helpful in our career progression:
 - Writing and publishing
 - Managing or supervising other people
 - Presentation skills
 - Use of technology
 - Technical skills
 - Networking and understanding the implications of research in different environments.
- You might have a couple of examples of individuals you know who have made a transition between different roles/sectors/environments as part of an ongoing career development journey.
- Telling your own career development journey (where you have come from and where you are planning on going to may help illustrate the points you are collecting from others).

Session 2: Mapping the future for individual researchers

(20 minutes)

Purpose

The aim of this part of the programme is to look at ways in which career development is individual, based on a researcher's ambitions, experiences and interests, and has many opportunities to go in different directions.

It starts to set the scene for looking at a wide range of possibilities for researchers in career development terms and encourages principal investigators to look outside their discipline for career development opportunities.

Process

Led by the programme leader

Participants work in small groups to produce posters.

There are ten case study examples (B3) of researchers who are currently six months from the end of their doctorate. Working in small groups the participants will be asked to look at the starting point for these researchers and map out a possible career path for them over a 15 year period.

Case studies of postgraduate researchers have been deliberately selected for this exercise despite the course focus on research staff, as the first stage of career development for these researchers could be a postdoctoral position. The material is intended to encourage principal investigators to think more widely about postdoctoral career opportunities, rather than just from a position of a member of research staff. There are no prescriptive answers to this; researchers in different subject areas or from different higher education institutions will have differing views on this subject and the exercise is a hypothetical one.

Structure

Introduction 5 minutes

First case study maps 10 mins

Second case study maps 10 mins

Exhibition of maps 10 mins

Debrief of activity and draw out learning points 5 mins

Resources

One set of 'Career conversations cards' (resource B3) printed out onto A4 sheets, ten pages in total. (These cards can be laminated for multiple use.)

Ten pages of flipchart paper and pens.

Mothers in Science book (optional).

Flipchart paper and pens.

PowerPoint presentation A2 (Slide 7).

Detail

Introduction 5 mins

Split participants into three or four smaller groups and ask them to arrange themselves around a group table. Provide each group with flipchart paper and pens.

At the front of the room lay out the ten cards face down (details of the case studies follow on the next two pages).

Ask one participant from each group to collect one card for their group.

First case study maps 10 mins

Once each group has selected a card, ask them to draw either a map, flow diagram or list a possible career path for this individual over the next 15 years, based on their experiences and view of academia now and in the next 15 years. Each of the researchers on the cards has a different background and has the potential for a different career path. This activity starts to bring in the elements of equality and diversity to the session and also encourages participants to think about careers inside and out of research.

Note: Tempting as it might be for participants to provide options for the individual researcher they pick, this activity is about:

- Cause and effect in career planning
- Non-traditional career routes as well as traditional career routes
- Thinking about the step beyond the next step when developing a career

The options part of the career journey needs to be built into the journey rather than kept as open-ended possibilities. The exercise is about exploring different options that individuals have and not being restricted to a traditional career path, regardless of their background.

Second case study maps 10 mins

After ten minutes ask the participants to repeat the process with another researcher.

It is not essential to use all the cards. You may wish to select the cards you use based on the group you are working with or alternatively you may wish to supplement or replace the case studies with examples of researchers based at your institution.

Exhibition of maps 10 mins

As the maps are finished, fix them to the wall to create an exhibition of the posters. Stick the description card at the top of each poster so that there is congruence between the poster and the researcher it refers to.

Allow ten minutes for participants to go around to look at the other posters and get a sense of what other groups have come up with, before returning to debrief the exercise.

Session 2: Mapping the future for individual researchers

(20 minutes)

Detail

Debrief of activity and draw out learning points 5 mins

Use these debrief questions to draw out the learning from the exercise:

- In their groups ask participants to rate the poster they thought demonstrated the most noteworthy career map and ask them (as a group) to share that with the rest of the participants. Why did they choose this one?
- Which researcher was given the most 'traditional' career plan? Two of the researchers came from very similar backgrounds at doctoral level. Did they have similar career maps? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Typically, ten years after graduating with a doctorate only 10% of postgraduate researchers are still in academia. Is that reflected in these ten case studies?
- How were the diversity issues tackled in the exercise. Were value judgements made about researchers from different backgrounds/different subjects/different ages when completing their doctorate/different areas of diversity?

Summary of the ten researchers who appear on the cards:

Each card says:

I'm six months away from the end of my doctorate. Please plot the potential for my career over the next 15 years:

- Julian hopes to complete his doctorate on time.
- He has published three papers during the last two years of his doctorate and his supervisor hopes his thesis will yield two more.
- Julian is a senior risk manager for an insurance firm and is looking for his well regarded research to take him into new areas.

- Anna is a chemist who has already completed her research and is currently writing up. She expects to have her viva in three months time and have three months within her EPSRC funding to do any corrections.
- She has secured a postdoctoral researcher position within her department.
- She has published four papers whilst doing her doctorate and presented papers at two international conferences.

- Callum is a physicist who has already completed his research and is currently writing up. He expects to have his viva in three months time and have three months within his EPSRC funding to do any corrections.
- He has secured a postdoctoral researcher position within his department.
- He has published four papers whilst doing his doctorate and presented papers at two international conferences.

- Martin has had periods of limited supervision during his doctorate in music as his main supervisor has been undergoing chemotherapy and recovering from bowel cancer in the last six months.
- Due to the limited periods of supervision, he is submitting later than expected but thinks he will complete his research in the next six months although he will be writing up unfunded. He has been funded through his research to date by the AHRC.

- Cheng has enjoyed his doctorate in petroleum engineering and expects to have it completed within his three year funding from the government of his home country.
- He has really enjoyed his work and the strong relationship he has built with his supervisor and industrial contacts.
- He has a commitment to resume his teaching and research duties in his home country on completion of his doctorate.

- Theresa is on track to complete her research within the next three months, leaving her three months to write up.
- Her field is education and she has been working with local schools and social services as part of her research.
- She has cerebral palsy and is a wheelchair user.

Session 2: Mapping the future for individual researchers

(20 minutes)

- Hannah already teaches at the university in the engineering department and has been completing her doctorate part-time over the last five years in order to be able to apply for more senior academic jobs and not be restricted to teaching undergraduates on a casual basis.
- During that time, she and her civil partner have combined their work and research with bringing up their five year old daughter.

- Steven has enjoyed his doctorate in geology and is keen to start writing up within his funded period.
- His supervisor has been speaking to him about potential postdoctoral funding working within the oil exploration area.
- Steven currently has £45,000 of debt from his undergraduate degree.

- Melissa will be finishing her arts-based research in the next six months. She has been working in collaboration with arts bodies in the UK and the USA, looking at the ways in which installations in public spaces engage non-academic audiences.
- She has self-funded this research and has been working part-time throughout in a variety of jobs.

- Susan will be completing her doctorate in the informatics department and is hoping her viva will be in five to six months time as she has written several chapters and hopes to have her thesis written in four months time.
- Although she has published two papers during her doctorate she has not been able to attend many conferences and does not have a wide network at the university or within the subject.
- She has a son who will start school at the beginning of the next academic year.

At the end of this session, refer participants to the 'Mothers in Science' resource; this has career mapping examples of successful women scientists, which will reinforce some of the key points from this exercise.

Session 3: Reviewing individual and department attitudes to equality and diversity

(20 minutes)

Purpose

This is a reflective part of the programme and is specifically focused on equality and diversity. It builds on the previous activity, which aimed to help individuals to examine their own and others' attitudes towards career development.

Process

Led by the programme leader

Participants work individually and then in pairs.

There is a worksheet (B2) with a series of 12 questions to prompt individual reflection. These questions have been adapted from Equality Challenge Unit's publication 'Managing Fairly'. You will need to prepare some information and thoughts about the answers to the 12 questions from within your institution in order to debrief this activity and/or this would be a good point in this training to co-facilitate the programme with an equality and diversity consultant from your institution.

Structure

Introduction 2 mins

Individual reflection and discussion 10 mins

Debrief of activity and draw out learning points 8-10 mins

Resources

Handout B2 – 1 per person

Detail

Introduction 2 mins

Introduce this session as aiming to bring the equality and diversity elements of career management into sharper focus. It is an activity for individuals to do on their own first and then discuss with another participant.

The next part of the process is to open discussion up to the whole group.

Debrief of activity and draw out learning points 10 mins

The debrief for this exercise is likely to involve questions to the facilitator about the policies, practices and help available in the institution so it would be useful to be prepared for this discussion.

- Ask participants to share any points from their discussions.
- Which questions made them think?
- Which questions were they very clear about?
- Which questions did they have a 'reaction' to?
- What is their reaction to their role in equality and diversity? In their environment? In this institution?

Session 4: Action planning

(10 minutes)

As the last session was reflective, this session is deliberately short and if you/the participants would prefer more time for the previous activity this can be shortened to around 5 minutes.

This part of the course provides participants with the opportunity to consider the 'so what?' part of the training.

Ask participants to work individually or in pairs to think about and write down for themselves three actions that they would like to implement from the course in the next four weeks.

The actions should be specific with an anticipated outcome and should be time-bound to complete within one day, one week or one month of the course.

Emphasise the need to write the actions down so that they become a reality and suggest that participants work in pairs to exchange details of their goals and to reinforce them as practical next steps.

Three questions to stimulate action planning are:

1. What do I need to do to influence my wider environment on this subject?
2. What do I need to do to be better informed about and do differently with my group/team?
3. What do I need to be better informed about and do differently as a result?

Closing the course

Bring the course to a close by recapping the main themes of the session:

- What is a career these days?
- How can principal investigators contribute to the development of their research staff's careers?
- What equality and diversity issues do they need to keep in mind when managing their team?

Additionally, summarise a few of the key points from the discussions and point participants in the direction of the institution's equality and diversity resources (either physical or internet based ones) and possibly in the direction of the Royal Society of Chemistry's document 'Planning for Success'

www.rsc.org/ScienceAndTechnology/Policy/Documents/PlanningforSuccess.asp