

# APPRAISAL GUIDANCE FOR POSTDOCTORAL STAFF

## Appraisal Guidance

Postdoctoral/Research Staff are employed to undertake research, playing an important role in our Research Mission to be distinguished by our academic strengths and recognised globally for the social, economic and cultural benefit we deliver through our research. One of the key priorities of our Research Strategy is to foster a vibrant postgraduate and postdoctoral community, providing a learning and training environment of the highest quality.

Appraisal is central to the development and training of researchers. Alongside the review and planning of research activity, it is an opportunity to reflect and review the skills and expertise acquired as a postdoc. During the appraisal process and ongoing discussions the postdoc should be encouraged to review their career progression, by identifying gaps and developing strategies to move towards research independence.

This document should also be read within the context of the Appraisal Guidance Notes for all Staff and the Queen's University Research Strategy 2016-2021.

## Academic Standards/Profiles

It is important to note that any reference made to academic standards, academic profiles or the three year academic cycle pertain to academic staff only, not postdoctoral researchers in training roles.

## Professional Standards

Queen's 'Professional Standards' are a set of 9 statements which articulate how the University expects all its staff to behave. They are applicable across all roles (including postdoctoral researchers) and provide a clear description of the types of behaviours that underpin effective performance.

## Objective Setting

For Postdoctoral staff the headings included in the appraisal form may require some adjustment to reflect the key objectives of the role (eg: Research, Project Management/Leadership, Impact/Knowledge Exchange Activities, Education).

The appraiser and appraisee should consider key objectives taking into account the sub-headings mentioned for each. (see Table 1 below). If a particular area is not applicable to the workplan, simply record not applicable (N/A).

Table 1 : Objective Setting

Key Objectives
A. Research Publications, Presentations, Grant Milestones, Reports, Patents, Collaborations, Contribution to Grant Applications, Research Integrity : Conduct and Governance
B. Project Management/Leadership Contribution to Managing Projects/Budgets/Resources, Research Planning, Committee Contribution
C. Impact/Knowledge Exchange Activities Outreach, Public Engagement, Knowledge Transfer, Engaging with Policy Makers/End Users, Industry Partnership, Translational Impact etc.
D. Education Teaching, Supervision, Mentoring (where applicable to the post)

### Professional and Career Development

During the appraisal process for research staff discussions will be held to review progress towards the goals of the specific research project as well as performance and training matters directly connected to the research project. A further outcome of these discussions is to discuss appraisees' career plans. The appraisee will briefly outline their short, medium and long term aims in Section 3, which will be discussed with the appraiser during the appraisal meeting.

Professional and career development conversations should take place on an ongoing basis between research staff and their Principal Investigator/Manager, with the appraisal discussion providing an opportunity to agree specific actions to assist the researcher make progress in their career aims.

Outlined below are a number of resources which may be useful in preparing for these career-focused discussions.

### Further Resources

The Vitae organisation ([www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk)) provides guidance on supporting researchers. Queen's is a member of Vitae and you can register to access a wide range of resources. Of particular relevance to career-focused conversations is the [Guide to Career Conversations with Researchers](#)

Vitae website section on [supervising and managing researchers](#):

The **Researcher Development Framework (RDF)** is a tool to support the personal, professional and career development of researchers. It offers an overview of the range of skills and competencies required within a research career and can be used by research staff and their appraiser/manager to structure discussions on professional and career development. A copy and further information is available at the link below:

Queen's provides a number of workshops to assist research staff in reviewing and planning their career development, which could be referred to by postdoctoral researchers during career-focused conversations. These are listed below:

- [Planning Your Research Career](#)
- [Preparing for academic interviews](#)
- [Writing Your Academic CV](#)
- [Career Exploration for Researchers](#)

A Careers Advisor for research staff is also available to provide 1:1 support.

Research staff develop and learn to manage research within the workplace. This workplace learning can be supported and enhanced through access to a wide range of research-focused staff development activities provided in the Research Staff Development Programme. Based on the researcher's career aims and discussions with the appraisers, agreement should be reached on the most relevant development activities to assist in progressing these aims, including attendance at staff development events. Further details below:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/crs/ProfessionalandPersonalDevelopment/>

Research Staff have access to all the development activity provided via the overall Staff Training and Development programme

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/stdp/>

Useful external links to career development information for researchers:

- <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/spotlight/developing-as-a-researcher>
- <http://www.nature.com/nature/careers/>
- <https://www.sciencemag.org/careers>