

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN – Natural and Computing Sciences

POSTDOC ACADEMIC MANAGERS (NCS) – JOB DESCRIPTION (DESIGNATED “POSTDOC CHAMPIONS”)

I) General Responsibility

The Postdoctoral Academic Managers will be appointed by the Head of School and are responsible to the Head of School for the effective general management of postdoctoral staff within a defined group within the School and for ensuring the provision of academic leadership is in line with School, College and Institutional objectives. The Postdoctoral Academic Managers will meet regularly in an executive group with the Head of School, to share best practices, discuss issues of wider interest, and to gradually converge/agree on a coherent and unified (as much as possible) way to see to their duties (see below).

The role is NOT to direct research or other duties (that is the duty of the PI, see elsewhere), and indeed those appointed will not be PAMs for their own PDRAs. PAMs will provide an “alternative communication channel” with PDRAs, to explore issues which are complementary to those issues handled with/by PIs.

II) Main Duties

- (i) Responsibility for line management of all postdoctoral staff within a defined group, as devolved by the Head of School. ‘Line management’ here is defined in terms of induction, collation of training needs from annual reviews, mentoring, probationary support and other forms of feedback and contact, together with conduct, capability and performance management;
- (ii) Creating a supportive environment within the School for training and development activities and promoting opportunities for career and personal development for PDRAs;
- (iii) Fostering the development of postdoctoral staff by liaising with annual reviewer (PI, normally) and by other means, monitoring progress and mentoring as required, with particular regard to probationary staff;
- (iv) Identifying generic training needs and aspirations of PDRA staff to feed into the staff development programme, with support from the Head of School and Director of Research;
- (v) Ensuring that the arrangements for those staff who are line managed comply with legal requirements, particularly on matters relating to Health and Safety at Work, Equality and Diversity and Research Data Management.
- (vi) Ensuring that postdoctoral staff are aware of the timelines for the Avoidance of Redundancy process and ensuring that both PDRA and PAM have input into that process.

- (vii) Liaising with the PI and ALM to ensure consistency within the discipline, and with the other PAMs to ensure sharing of best practice across the School.
- (viii) Additional competent/relevant duties as may be determined from time to time.

(PRINCIPAL) INVESTIGATORS (PIs) – Responsibilities

Role of Principal Investigator:

The PI will have responsibility for normal management of PDRAs including:

- Developing and managing the direction of the project
- Reviewing and managing the progress towards project objectives
- Directing and managing the project's outputs
- Day-to-day management of the PDRA and their activities
- Project-based opportunities for PDRA development
- Annual reviews and liaising with PAMs regarding training and other needs
- Financial management of the project
- Normal career development as outlined below

PAMs and PIs are both expected to share responsibilities in the following:

- Encouraging PDRAs to become aware of the importance of professional development
- Encouraging and supporting PDRAs to take part in development activities within projects and at development events provided by the University and/or national events
- Helping PDRAs to realise their potential and to achieve research excellence
- Raising PDRAs's awareness of career opportunities within and outside of academia
- Making appropriate sources of information available such as the services available for careers and staff development professionals within the University and at national level (e.g. <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/>)
- Exploring career aspirations and skills development
- Offering PDRAs more responsibility as appropriate (in research leadership, teaching, etc.) so as to improve their portfolio of professional activities

Complaints and grievances are very rare, but should these arise, they should follow the appropriate procedures, as detailed in <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/your-responsibilities-3690>

Stage 1 describes the informal process, and the PAM can be considered as a neutral party should the grievance be in relation to the PI.

Similarly, issues with the PDRA should be raised by the PI to the PAM informally and outwith the annual review process, that is, it should not just be left for the annual review cycle, but should be dealt with at the time.

Some useful links:

Concordat to support career development: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/develop/policy-strategy/concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers-186.php>

National Vitae site for Researcher development: <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/>

Staffnet: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/>

Policy Zone: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/policies-proceedures-plans-and-guidelines-399.php>

Promotions Guidance: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/academic-staff-1500.php>

R. Graham. "Does teaching advance your academic career? Perspectives of promotion procedures in UK higher education". The Royal Academy of Engineering, March 2015. <http://www.raeng.org.uk/publications/reports/does-teaching-advance-your-academic-career>

C. Armstrong. How to become a lecturer. April 2008. <http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/working-in-higher-education/1057/how-to-become-a-lecturer>

C. Armstrong. Long Term Academic Career Planning. October 2008. <http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/managing-your-career/1231/long-term-academic-career-planning>

C. Buddle. Three things you should know before deciding to become a Professor. December 2013. <http://www.scilogs.com/expiscor/three-things-you-should-know-before-deciding-to-become-a-professor/> (for a bit of humour!)

M. LaBossiere. Why You Should (Probably) Not Be A Professor. November 2014. (<http://blog.talkingphilosophy.com/?p=8268>) (for more humour)