



UCD Research Careers & Professional Development Planning

What is RC&PD Planning?

Research Careers & Professional Development (RC&PD) Planning is the process by which the PI and the Postdoc Research Fellow (PD) will meet to discuss and agree development for the PD during their time in UCD. The process provides a means of taking a proactive and constructive approach to ongoing development of the PD's skills. With careful planning and with the support of their PI, the PD can take advantage of development opportunities and target areas that are most relevant in the context of their particular research area and longer-term career aspirations.

Principles underpinning RC&PD Planning

- RC&PD Planning is mandatory for all PDs at Level 1 and Level 2
- The PD is responsible for his/her own development and is supported by the PI
- RC&PD Planning is to support a PD in their current role as well as having a relevance for their future chosen career
- The 4 Development Categories do not carry equal weighting and the 'Research & Research Management' category is the key area in terms of development of knowledge and skills for PDs' at both level 1 and level 2
- '*Development*' is used in its broadest meaning and interventions will include coaching, mentoring, shadowing, training courses and any other means agreed by the PD and PI that will facilitate learning
- A balance between the demands of the PD Fellow's role and the desire for development needs to be maintained – **up to 3 development objectives** over a 9-12 month period is recommended in order to maintain that balance

Benefits of RC&PD Planning

Adopting a constructive approach to RC&PD planning provides a schedule to work to, facilitates motivation and offers a framework for monitoring and evaluating achievements. It can lay the foundation for:

- Assisting the PD in honing their knowledge and skills and bringing these to bear on the position they currently hold within UCD
- Contributing in the fullest way possible to the goals of the research project and becoming a valued member of the research group
- Re-appraising where a PD wants to go with their career and how to get there
- Exposing the PD to and building-up transferable skills (such as business planning, networking, communications skills etc.) which will support the chosen career path
- Positioning the PD to take advantage of development opportunities which may arise as well as making them happen
- Keeping track of career development meetings between PD and PI in a systematic way by recording meetings in the UCD Postdoc Development Portal

Research Careers & Professional Development Planning Process

The Research Careers & Professional Development Process takes place between the PI and the PD. The process takes place on an annual basis with the first planning session taking place within 3 months of the PD commencing their contract. A final review should also be conducted towards the end of the contract of employment for a final assessment of progress and opportunity for feedback.



Overview of 4 stages of the RC&PD Planning Process;

- 1. PD Preparation**
 - 1) Self-Assessment by the PD
 - 2) Clarify goal(s) and identifying needs
 - 3) Explore development options
 - 4) Forward document to PI for review
- 2. PI Preparation**
 - 1) Review PD's self-assessment
 - 2) Arrange first planning meeting
- 3. Planning & Implementation phase**
 - 1) Meeting between PI and PD to discuss and agree development plan
 - 2) Implement and record development
- 4. Review and Feedback phase**
 - 1) PI and PD meet again to review the progress 9-12 months into the contract
 - 2) PD continues with original or amended plan for the second half of the contract
 - 3) Final meeting between PD and PI to review progress to give feedback and record any closing comments

Stage 1 – PD Preparation

1. PD Self-Assesses against RC&PD Framework

1.0 Why Self-Assess against the RC&PD

To kick start the RC&PD Planning process, the PD will first need to do a self- assessment of their current development against the indicators associated with each of the Development Sub-Categories described on the RC&PD Framework. This self-assessment will assist the PD in identifying their current development needs and pinpointing where they need to focus their development over the coming 9-12 months.

2. PD Clarifies Goal(s) and Identifies Needs

2.0 Clarify goal

Development needs will differ depending on a PD's experience and career aspirations. Is the goal primarily to improve current performance and effectiveness on the research project? Perhaps the PD is considering a particular career path that requires developing competence in a specific area(s). Or is development needed to re-motivate or re- orient a PD?

Some PD will already know what they are good at, some may not. In order to find out, various means are available including self-assessment against the Research Careers & Professional Development Framework, benchmarking against national and international standards and/or feedback from others.

Feedback from peers/colleagues as well as from the PI is an easy and accessible route to finding out more about others perception and reflecting on how these observations match or differ from their own perception.



UCD Research Careers & Professional Development Planning

When assessing needs, the PD needs to keep a balance between;

What's important to the PD?

- Their own value system, involving private life and family, work and money, constraints and obstacles to mobility, now and in the future
- Their career aspirations and how they fit with their value system

What's important to the PI and the Research Project?

- What skills/knowledge are key to the success of the project and what particular skills does the PD bring to the research group?
- What areas if developed would bring most value and impact to the Research Group

2.1 Identify Needs

Using the *Research Careers & Professional Development Framework* and the indicators associated with each development category the PD can reflect upon and assess their own competencies and progress to date. The indicators should be viewed as guiding rather than prescriptive statements. They can be used to reflect upon career path and development to date and to identify key areas for the PD to work upon in the next 9-12 months.

It is recommended that the PD commits to **up to three** development goals over a development period.

As a result of this analysis and using the *Research Careers & Professional Development Framework* as a guide, the PD should now have a clearer picture of the skills or knowledge they will need to acquire, update or improve.

3. PD Explores Development Options

The PD should explore development options and consider these options in the context of the following;

1. **Learning style** – some of us learn best from trying new things, whilst others prefer to sit back and observe; some prefer to put thing to the test, others to carry out research at first.
2. **Resources available** – think laterally when trying to identify sources of help for development. In addition to UCD, consider other institutions and agencies both in the public and private sectors, literature, multi-media packages, professional institutes, peer groups, networks and colleagues.
3. **Range of learning options available** – people engage in a range of activities for developmental purposes. Below are just some of the options to explore:
 - One-to-one coaching and/or mentoring
 - Shadowing recognised 'experts' in a particular area
 - Attending training events and development workshops
 - Attending talks, workshops, conferences
 - Getting involved in or leading a new/different aspect of the research project
 - Presenting to peers
 - Networking both internally and externally
 - Gathering regular feedback from peers, PI and others

4. PD Forwards Self-Assessment

Once the PD has completed their self-assessment and recorded examples of their experience and competence against the RC&PD Framework indicators, they then forward a copy to their PI.



Stage 2 - PI Preparation

1. PI reviews the self-assessment conducted by the PD

When the PI receives the PD's self-assessment, he/she can review it and evaluate it against the PD's work performance to date to see if it matches with their experience of the PD. At this stage the PI can also make a note of their observations of the PD and both sets of information will facilitate the discussion at the First Planning meeting.

2. PI Arranges First Planning Meeting with PD

It is recommended that this First Planning Meeting takes place no later than 3 months into the PD's position. The initial few weeks following the local induction between the PI and the PD can be used to observe and reflect upon the skills required and the gaps that may be emerging which will help focus the discussion at the planning meeting.

Stage 3 – Planning & Implementation

1. First Planning Meeting - Discuss and Agree RC&PD Plan

Development is ultimately the responsibility of the PD but the PI is there to support and facilitate development. The PD will meet with their PI during the first 3 months of their period in UCD to agree upon a development plan for the next 9-12 months.

Before meeting with their PI the PD will already have assessed their own development needs and will have explored what areas they need to focus their attention. The objective of the meeting with their PI is to agree the RC&PD plan and to ensure that they are committed to implementing it. The meeting is also an opportunity to discuss and assess any barriers which might prevent them from putting their plan into action.

Remember development needs must be balanced against the demands of the role so ensure that the plan is both relevant and achievable. Each PI can bring his/her experience to the table and assist with this process.

For each of the gaps identified, the PD should set themselves a development objective. They will discuss and agree these with their PI during their RC&PD planning session. However remember that although the PI is there to support you in their development, the PD is ultimately responsible for their own development.

2. Implement and Record Development

Development can take many forms and can include shadowing, mentoring, attending/giving seminars as well as more traditional training courses. The development interventions which are not centrally co-ordinated e.g. mentoring, work shadowing or attendance at local seminars



UCD Research Careers & Professional Development Planning

should be organised and implemented locally with the PD taking the responsibility for following up with the development with the support of the PI as necessary.

The PD should keep a record of all development implemented and should use the RC&PD template to record the date, the development undertaken and the strategy for development.

The PD can log career development meetings with their PI on the UCD Postdoc Development Portal. How to log in to the Postdoc Development Portal:

- Open UCD Connect
- Click and log in to InfoHub
- Select the Human Resources tab at the top of the screen
- Click on My Development Workspace

Stage 4 – Review & Feedback

3. Evaluate and Review and seek Feedback

Evaluation and review is key stage to the development cycle because it enables both the PD and the PI to discover whether the development activity was worthwhile and applicable and it also gives both a chance to track progress.

3.0 PD Self-Assessment

It is recommended that prior to meeting with their PI for their interim and end of contract review that the PD first self-assesses their progress by asking the following questions:

- What am I better able to do as a result?
- Has my experience(s) thrown up further development needs?
- How well did this development method(s) work?
- Could I have gained more from this development activity?
- Would I follow this approach again?

3.1 Review & Feedback Meetings

Review meetings with the PI will also provide information for the next stage of development. Goals may have altered and new needs may have emerged. It is important to revise the RC&PD plan accordingly.

It is recommended that the PD reviews progress a once a year with the support of the PI. The PI will give feedback from their perspective in terms of the changes they have observed and the progress made with selected development objectives.

This meeting will also be an opportunity to plan ahead for the second half of the contract and to agree a set of development goals in line with where the PD sees their career opportunities. All career development meetings should be recorded in the Postdoc Development Portal (see Stage 3 – Planning & Implementation, Sec. 2).

4. Continue with RC&PD Plan

Based on the review meeting the PD has had with their PI, they may want to focus their attention on other aspects of their development. The areas for focus will have been agreed as part of the review meeting and will form the basis for development for the second half of the contract.



UCD Research Careers & Professional Development Planning

The focus for this period of development will depend somewhat upon whether the PD is at Post-Doctoral Fellow Level 1 or Post-Doctoral Level 2 level and how clear they are about their desired career path.

5. Final Review with PI

Their final review meeting with the PI will happen towards the end of the PD contract. This is an opportunity for both to take stock and reflect on progress during this postdoctoral period and to draw conclusions on where these insights might point in terms of future career opportunities.

The format of this review will be an open and candid dialogue between the PD and their PI with the objective of reflecting upon their time in this position. It is also the time to discuss or explore further options for the future.

Their PI will ask the PD to self-assess against the Research Skills & Career Development Framework once again to see where progress has been made and which areas might still be useful to develop further. The PI will also take the opportunity to give feedback from their perspective based on all facets of the PD's work, again using the framework as a guide.

Using both sets of information the PD now should have a clearer picture of their skills and experience which can be used when planning the next stages of their career.