YOUR CAREER JOURNEY

2021/22 click the coloured links to find out more

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHER

Make the most of support and resources available to plan your professional and career development.

GETTING STARTED AND SETTLING IN

Connect with colleagues at the University via Departmental Research Staff Associations and University Research Staff Liaison Officers. Also look at the University Research Themes and Champions and explore how you connect with their interdisciplinary work. Have a chat about opportunities to get involved with the researcher community here at York.

Identify your strengths and potential areas for development using Vitae Researcher Development Framework and other career planning tools and activities from Vitae (use your University email address to register and access Vitae resources). Browse available training via the Learning Management System (LMS) Events Calendar to help address your development needs.

Create a Professional and Career Development Plan to keep as an evolving document and to share with your line manager and/or mentor. Use this reflection to identify ‘SMART’ goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound.

Get to know your strengths, values and career motivators, remember these might evolve and change over time. You can explore these by coming along to a Career Planning training session, by exploring the YGRS Careers webpage (this includes information relevant for postdocs too!) and the Career Ideas and Inspiration Padlet. To access the Padlet, you need to login to Padlet with Google (your University account) first.
Incorporate regular career planning discussions into meetings with your line manager. Before these meetings, think about what skills and training you need, and whether you could gain additional experience with a secondment or a research visit.

Attend a RETT training session on Effective Project Management. Now is a great time to make a project plan and incorporate some of our suggested career planning milestones.

Apply for a mentor. Mentoring provides an opportunity for you to discuss and develop your professional development and career plans (among other things) with a more experienced academic (in addition to your line manager or Principle Investigator). Your mentor might come from a different department or discipline and therefore bring a fresh perspective and suggestions for interdisciplinary research.

Prioritise your health and wellbeing – remember you can seek independent, free and confidential support 24 hours a day 365 days a year through the University’s Employee Assistance Provider, Health Assured.

Allocate a minimum of 10 days (pro rata, per year) to engage with opportunities to support your professional development. Some examples include; engaging with the public, supporting widening participation and outreach initiatives, participating within a Department, Faculty or University wide committee, teaching and supporting student learning and supervision, or enterprise and knowledge exchange training and activity.

Engage with learned societies and professional associations in your discipline; many provide dedicated career support, professional development and networking opportunities for junior members.

Keep a record of your ongoing achievements for future funding or job applications. You might want to refer to this prompt list of activities and your LMS training record for some ideas and inspiration.
CONTINUING YOUR PROFESSIONAL AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Expand your network. Building connections both within and beyond your field of research will give you a broader perspective, enable you to identify new ideas and opportunities and discover your unique research identity. Effective networking also makes you and your work more visible and memorable to others. Unsure where to start? Attend a dedicated RETT training session to inspire you with ideas.

Raise your profile using social media such as LinkedIn, Twitter or ResearchGate. Create a personal website and keep your University staff profile and PURE profile up to date. Attend a dedicated RETT training session to help with this.

Review and update your Professional and Career Development Plan and training needs in discussion with your line manager and/or mentor. At this stage, you might want to discuss developing skills for research independence, such as contributing to grant applications, enhancing your awareness of the processes involved in applying for funding and exploring opportunities to be a co-applicant on research within and outside of the University and/or department.

Considering a career beyond academia? Now is a great time to start researching your options – a great place to start is ‘What do researchers do?’ from Vitae. You can also come along to a RETT session on Careers Beyond Academia to explore PhD-graduate career journeys in academia and other sectors.

Get inspiration from other PhD-graduates using York Profiles & Mentors, where you can browse profiles and discover career choices of alumni from different departments. Ask a question to find out more and connect with alumni from across the globe.

An informational interview is a great way to find out more about a specific profession, industry or organisation beyond academia. Browse professional networking sites, such as LinkedIn and York Profiles & Mentors to identify someone you might be able to approach for an informal chat. Prepare some questions about your chosen company or industry, career paths to get there and workplace culture.
Listen to the podcast, What Do You Actually Do?!, to find out what different careers are actually like (including a number of post-PhD careers).

For fellowship applications and academic roles it’s important to be able to distinguish your unique research identity and what differentiates you from others. Reflect on why YOU, the person conducting the research, is as important as the project and the place. Providing evidence of leadership, civic responsibility, and your networks are important.

Seek out opportunities to contribute towards learning and teaching at the University. At this stage in your career you might want to consider broadening and expanding any existing teaching experience. Check out support and resources for research staff who teach; you may also want to consider professional recognition in the form of an Advance HE Fellowship.

Prepare for your Performance Development Review (PDR) using the University’s HR guidance. You may also want to refer to this recorded workshop from the University of Liverpool to help you prepare.

MOVING onto the NEXT STAGE of your CAREER

Use what you’ve learned during your academic career to help others by becoming a mentor. Mentoring demonstrates academic citizenship, team work, emotional intelligence, empathy and a creative approach to problem solving. All of these skills and qualities are highly prized by employers both within and beyond academia.

Research vacancy sources and understand how to tailor your CV and applications to different sectors. Once you are ready, start applying for jobs!

Once you make the shortlist, practice your interview skills in preparation for the big day. Take advantage of online practice interviews tailored for specific employers, or arrange a mock interview with a mentor, friend or colleague.
Have identified an ideal Career Path for yourself (and a contingency plan).

Have updated your CV and tailored it to your chosen field.

Be able to articulate what skills, experience and knowledge you have gained.

Have an understanding of recruitment processes in your desired sector and how to succeed in applications, interviews and assessment centres.

Know where to find 1-to-1 support if you need help to develop or progress your career plans.

Applying for an academic position or a Fellowship? Check out the Academic Careers Padlet and access University support for prospective Fellows. See also guidance on writing a ‘Narrative CV’ which is currently being piloted in several UKRI funding calls.

Check out some online resources from Careers and Placements to help you prepare for other recruitment activities such as presentations, psychometric tests and assessment centres.

Interested in working outside the UK? Explore global career options and international work, including academic careers outside the UK.

Use online resources and skills you have gained over the course of your academic career to stay up to date on career opportunities.

Remember that wherever possible, the University will seek to maintain individuals in employment in work of a broadly comparable nature. If you would like to continue working for the University, first familiarise yourself with the University redeployment policy and check with your Department HR Advisor as to when you might be eligible to register to receive the redeployment e-bulletin. You can also join the #job-vacancies Slack channel to get immediate notifications of new internal positions.

Final checklist

☐ Have identified an ideal Career Path for yourself (and a contingency plan).

☐ Have updated your CV and tailored it to your chosen field.

☐ Be able to articulate what skills, experience and knowledge you have gained.

☐ Have an understanding of recruitment processes in your desired sector and how to succeed in applications, interviews and assessment centres.

☐ Know where to find 1-to-1 support if you need help to develop or progress your career plans.