Thriving in your Research Position

Being a researcher in Edinburgh

"During my position, I have gained practical experience in research projects, created networks by working with different academics and explored new areas of interest."

(Postdoc, University of Edinburgh)

INSTITUTE FOR ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Thriving in your postdoc

This guide has been written to help provide you with the skills and awareness required to thrive in your research position at the University of Edinburgh

Introduction

Your postdoc position is an exciting opportunity to gain experience, academic independence and new responsibilities. What you achieve in this role will help prepare you for your next position.

All postdoc positions contain challenges. While these challenges create the stimulating environment that makes a job in academia so appealing, it is crucial that you have the skills and support necessary to overcome them and develop as a result.

This guide contains practical advice, case studies and support to help you thrive in your postdoc. The theme of the first section is resilience, to help you prevent, approach and overcome challenges. The second section outlines ways for you to develop and use your skills, which will help improve your research and make you a competitive member in your field. The third section demonstrates support inside and outside of the University that is available to you.

This guide has been written thanks to a range of postdoc staff working across the University for engaging in this project. Their experiences and feedback have been crucial in highlighting common themes that are affecting postdoc staff, which are addressed in this guide. A range of their case studies are included, enabling you to learn from their stories and experiences.

Remember that every postdoc experience is unique and depends to some extent on your position as well as experiences and personality. This means that strategies which some people find useful, may not work for you. Finally, while this guide does not aim to offer a solution to mental health issues, it will highlight a range of organisations that can offer appropriate support.

Who is this guide for?

This guide may be useful for all research staff at the University of Edinburgh. It may be particularly useful for postdoc staff, a term covering all non-tenured staff members conducting research at the University. This usually includes research assistants and associates, postdocs, and research/teaching fellows.

How can I make the most of this guide?

This guide includes opportunities for you to reflect and write down your thoughts. To make the most of the guide, print of pages 16, 21, 23 and 27, and complete the exercises after reading each section. You can also complete these sections electronically by downloading the Microsoft Word version (link). Engaging in these activities will personalise guide to you and allow you to check whether you are developing and achieving your goals.

Resilience

What is resilience?

The term resilience originated from the physical sciences, where it was used to describe an object that returns to its usual shape after being put under pressure. Resilience is now associated with a range of meanings, but most definitions refer to the ability to remain adaptive in the face of challenges and learning from the experience to become better prepared for the next setback.

Your resilience will change over your lifetime depending on the challenges you face. By preventing problems at work, hearing others' stories and adopting strategies to improve your resilience, you will be better able to:

- Recover from setbacks quickly

- Learn from challenges

- Gain a positive perspective

- Support colleagues and students

- Become more integrated into the University

- Plan long-term goals and develop your career

Case Study Sarah Brown

Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the School of Health in Social Science

Sarah is a full-time post-doc at the University of Edinburgh. Having been diagnosed with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder at an early age, Sarah has had to develop effective strategies to build and maintain resilience.

"The first thing I have learned is that resilience is impossible without support."

"The majority of young professionals will admit that, at some point between completion of high school and current professional successes, they experienced a period of feeling misplaced and unsure of future directions. This story typically ends in the effective overcoming of hurdles, pushing past failures and moving onwards to better things. I guess in this sense, I am one of the lucky ones. I never had to experience uncertainty of next-steps and the 'what-am-I-going-to-do-with-my-life' dilemma. Therefore, I am not in a position to advise on how to move past this moment of uncertainty, although I admire those that can. I can only speak to my own experiences and associated hurdles, because my biggest hurdle has always been my greatest motivation.

I was diagnosed with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) when I was 7 years old, and therefore at the ripe age of 7 I knew I wanted to study and eventually work in the field of psychology. In a way it was a blessing because at a very young age I had to learn the benefits of resilience. After completing a BScHons at Acadia University (in psychology, unsurprisingly), I moved directly into my PhD by Research in Clinical Psychology at the University of Edinburgh. Approximately 4 months before I completed my PhD, I merged into a part-time postdoctoral fellowship within the same department and subsequently, upon completion of my degree, full-time.

However, transitions are my trigger, and even the easiest of transitions often set me back a few paces. There are things that can be learned from every experience, and it is my hope that I personally learn and move forward after ever period (typically a few months) of OCD. Perhaps more importantly, I hope that the challenges I have faced and the ways in which I have learned to be resilient will resonate with others.

The first thing I have learned is that resilience is impossible without support. I am fiercely independent and I crave control. However, unlike the healthy amount of independence that we all strive for, being overly independent can seclude you and break you down. From the exterior, postdocs are expected to be proficient at time management, juggling projects and students, and just be generally knowledgeable. I actually think we put this expectation on ourselves, too. It is unrealistic to make it through challenges while successfully juggling all of these expectations. Accept help from family, friends, and colleagues, and don't be hesitant to ask for help when you need it.

> **"Admit when you cannot measure up to expectations, because we all go through this."**

Secondly, brace for transitions and take breaks. Transitioning from your PhD to your postdoc is simultaneously exciting and terrifying. Allow yourself to be terrified, and be wary of your health – both mental and physical – throughout. Transitions are challenges in themselves, and you cannot be resilient without the physical or mental capacity to do so. I still struggle to take proper breaks without feeling guilt-ridden, but with time it gets easier. For me, enjoying my work and remaining motivated about my research is heavily dependent on breaks and on being prepared for transitions.

Although not the first, definitely the most important thing that I have learned is to be honest. Admit when you cannot measure up to expectations, because we all go through this. Admit that, despite the incorrect understanding that postdocs know absolutely everything about their topic, you do not know the answers to certain things. Also, be honest with superiors when you either (a) feel that you are correct about something or (b) you have an alternative, perhaps better solution to a problem. Be confident your abilities, they are why you got your postdoc position.

Finally, admit when you need help and be open about your stressors and mental state. I know this is cliché coming from someone who has studied psychology for the past 8 years, but from one human to another, majority of us know what mental illness feels like or looks like. The majority of us also know that it is incredibly difficult to talk about, because it feels like your mind (your greatest asset as an academic) is failing you. It is not a failure, it is a challenge, and challenges can be overcome by resilience.

As a disclaimer, I do not think I'm a perfect or near perfect example of resilience, and I still hit walls and roadblocks on a regular basis. It is important view my advice and suggestions from your own perspective, as we all have a different lens of understanding. I hope that your transitions are smooth and that your postdoc will be as rewarding for you as mine is for me. It will be filled with challenges, but hopefully accepting support, taking breaks and being prepared for transitions, and remaining honest will help you to surpass these challenges in full stride."

> **"[Mental Illness] is not a failure, it is a challenge, and challenges can be overcome by resilience."**

Preventing problems Resilience

Ideally, postdocs would be able to prevent all problems before they face them. Foreseeing potential problems and putting measures in place to prevent them or resolve them early will allow you to be less effected by issues so you can focus on your research.

Working relationships

Your research project may involve working closely with your Principal Investigator (PI) and/ or other colleagues. There are many ways that working with others can cause problems. Awareness of potential issues and strategies to prevent and resolve them will help ensure that you have healthy working relationships.

Working and communication style differences

Everyone has individual working and communication styles, which could negatively affect others. For example, a postdoc may believe that they need to work overtime because their PI does, even though the PI may not necessarily have told them to work overtime.

The best way to prevent style differences from becoming a problem is by approaching the person and addressing the issue. It's a good idea to mention specific examples of their behaviour that has affected you. If anyone else has been affected, ask whether they would like to be involved in the discussion. If you don't feel comfortable approaching them on your own, ask a colleague to mediate the conversation.

Integrity and misconduct issues

People may behave poorly at work for a range of reasons. Unfortunately, this behaviour will not be dealt with appropriately if the victim does not know the procedure to resolve the issue or does not have the confidence to come forward. Understandably, it takes a lot of confidence for a postdoc to stand up against their PI and tell them that their behaviour is unacceptable.

Don't tolerate any unacceptable behaviour. It is unlikely that you are the only person affected. By speaking up and resolving the issue, you can improve your current situation and help future postdocs. It is also likely that people will respect your courage and honesty.

Preventing problems Resilience

It is unacceptable for your PI to expect you to:

- Not take all of your annual leave because you need to work.

- Work while you are on annual leave.

- Not complete any career development activities (e.g. workshops and training). Throughout your contract, you should be able to make the most of opportunities inside and outside of the University. This may be difficult near to a deadline or if your PI has a genuine reason why you cannot attend.

- Always work overtime. The number of hours you should work on average is written in your contract. Due to the flexibility of your position, you may work more or less than this. There are likely to be busier times where your workload increases, such as before a deadline.

If you suspect that a colleague or PI is involved in research misconduct, contact the head of school. Misconduct includes:

- Someone else claiming credit for research that others conducted.

- Misrepresenting or fabricating data

- Somebody insisting authorship on a paper that they did not contribute to

- Using someone else's ideas, methodology, data or text without giving them appropriate credit.

- Not following ethical, legal and/or professional obligations

Read the Code of Practice for the Management and Career Development of Research Staff and the Concordat to support research integrity to learn more about misconduct and the responsibilities of your PI.

Preventing problems Resilience

Managing difficult conversations

Before the conversation:

- What is the issue? Think of examples of how this has affected you.
- What do you want to achieve from the conversation? Think of some actions that would help if they were taken.
- What is in it for the other person if they cooperate?
- How are you going to bring up the topic? Everyone reacts differently; some people may try to assign blame instead of taking responsibility, while others may try to intimidate you so you don't address the problem.

During the conversation:

- Begin by explaining the issue and its effect on you by giving examples.
- Actively listen to what they have to say.
- Hold your position on points; you may have to rephrase them and repeat them.
- Avoid asking questions beginning with 'why', as this is more likely to elicit defensiveness.
- Do not accept intimidating behaviour or excuses such as "that's what academia is like".
- Be open to negotiation. If they do not agree with your solution, work together to decide appropriate actions.

If you do not come out of the conversation with positive actions that will be taken, contact your head of school/institute.

To gain more support:

- Engage with staff mentoring systems at the University to get support in development.

  Mentoring connections

- Investigate whether your school/institute has a 'postdoc champion' who can help resolve the issue.
- Ask a member of staff whether they could be an 'informal mentor' who you could talk to confidentially.
- If there is a serious issue, contact your head of institute/school.

Case Study Postdoc Challenges

Postdoctoral research staff member at the University of Edinburgh

This postdoc talks about their experiences in previous postdoc positions and gives advice to others who may have an unsupportive PI or be worried about their career.

"Like a lot of post-docs I have been mainly employed as a research assistant on other people's research projects since finishing my PhD. This has had some really positive aspects. During my position, I have gained practical experience in research projects, created networks by working with different academics and explored new areas of interest. However, I have also found that this way of working has a lot of challenges, and I'll discuss these below.

Who is the PI? I have worked with some very supportive PIs, but I have also had the bad luck to work for PIs who were not supportive and whose research skills were poor quality. When thinking about taking on a research project it is important to consider who the PI is, what their reputation is, and how they will support your development as a researcher. I have learned that good PIs will talk about things like what publications you can get out of the project, and how they can support you to develop your research. In contrast, some PIs will only be interested in getting their own research project done. They want a 'jobbing' researcher, which is fine if you want to do this, but not so good if you want an academic career.

Be a little bit selfish I was employed on one research study as an inexperienced post-doc that was difficult to negotiate from the start. I found that I could try to challenge what was happening to an extent, but when the PI didn't want to listen to what I had to say I just had to keep my head down and do as good a job as I could. Looking back I regret sticking with this research project until the end. It was poor quality research, which didn't contribute to my development, and I think I would have been better off looking for another job. My personal inclination is to be loyal and committed to a project, but I think that as a post-doc who is in insecure employment, sometimes you have to be selfish and put your own needs first. If it's a bad project, leave.

A patchwork CV Doing lots of different, small, unrelated research projects makes it difficult to create a coherent narrative for my research CV. When confronted with immanent unemployment it is tempting to panic and take whatever work comes along first, however, I have learned that if at all possible it is a good idea to try and be more selective, and think about how the research project will further my own development. Then you also have to be imaginative, and look for whatever threads might join different research experiences together.

Get some teaching experience Permanent work in academia generally involves a lot of teaching, and if you are only doing research you'll lack a vital skill set. I was lucky to get a post that allowed me to do teaching and research, and this has enabled me to progress a lot more than purely research posts."

Case Study Anna Lisa Varri

Marie Sklodowska-Curie Fellow, School of Physics and Astronomy

Anna Lisa discusses her experiences working with others in research, highlighting ways to establish positive working relationship and prevent conflict.

"The people who may appear the harshest might also be the most honest and useful counterparts"

"From my perspective, the defining characteristics of any 'successful' professional interaction are mutual respect and satisfaction.

It is important to create a productive and respectful working relationship. I have learned that it's often beneficial to begin by agreeing on, or at least discussing, a definition of 'success'. By this, I mean disclosing personal goals and aspirations, which will help manage expectations. I strongly believe that misaligned expectations are often the root cause of disappointment, which can manifest itself as behaviours that disrupt resilience and usually hit people who have the least power hardest.

Interactions with junior collaborators: clarity of the objectives and initial instructions in the project and respect for the learning process are key when dealing with collaborators with relatively little experience. I have learned that the ability to re-assess and adapt original goals to fit the talents and preferences of an individual usually pays off. In addition, it is important to push people outside their intellectual comfort zone and encourage everyone to contribute to the decision-making process, especially if it will impact how they will spend their time. I usually offer (but not impose) advice on professional issues (e.g., a simple, open-ended question such as "Are you happy?" can go a long way, when asked at the right time). Incorporating these ideas from the beginning has usually helped me in establishing and maintaining productive and respectful relationships, which have often lasted well beyond the duration of the formal initial interaction.

Interactions with supervisors or senior collaborators: clarity and respect is still essential; but the postdoc may also need to fit within the envisaged role (if funded by the PI) as well as they can, while negotiating some time for independent research. When negotiating, ensure that your PI will benefit, e.g. if needed, offer to commit to supervising a student to free up some of their time. The people who may appear the harshest might also be the most honest and useful counterparts. I do my best to take criticism constructively (any feedback is better than no feedback!), but I wish to stress the importance of raising concerns or objections, if there are any.

If you're not receiving enough support, an efficient approach might be to progressively compose a "panel" of multiple mentors, each of them with a primary "advisory area" (e.g. funding, teaching, service, outreach...), so that you can ask targeted questions without relying too heavily on a single person.

"it is responsibility of the members to raise their discomfort and of the leader to address it"

Interactions within a collaborative environment: This can be a tricky issue, depending on the roles and the size and hierarchical structure of the group. Even if you are the most junior researcher in the group, do not be afraid to contribute creative ideas and make a meaningful contribution. Unfortunately, sometimes group dynamics may become biased or skewed for a variety of reasons including unconscious minority and gender-related issues, especially regarding intellectual attribution. In such cases, I believe that it is responsibility of the members to raise their discomfort and of the leader to address it. Only when this happens can you trace the origin of the conflict, find solutions, normalize the dynamics and prevent relapse.

I have limited experience as a junior leader, but so far I have tried to be as inclusive and approachable as possible (this has helped in earning respect, without imposing an artificial authority) and to make a serious effort in always giving credit where due!

If things start to go wrong despite all these prevention efforts, in my experience it's healthier not to let problems rot. Face that "uncomfortable conversation" you might be dreading -- it's usually worth it, even just to find closure.

Finally, I have learned to keep my eyes open for fresh inspiration, indirect mentoring, role models, and tips from outside academia, especially regarding professional interactions and development. Many resources from the industry and business side are freely available online (e.g., short articles in Harvard Business Review, The Economist, TED talks summarising the take-home points of books which otherwise I may not have the time or spirit to read in full, or YouTube interviews with unconventional leading figures from different sectors), with growing emphasis on inclusive and approachable leadership styles and the value of "kindness", especially in cooperative settings.

"Face that uncomfortable conversation you might be dreading — it's usually worth it"

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Preventing problems Resilience

Work-life balance

Working too many hours will drain your resilience and prevent you from working productively. Some people have experienced 'burn-out', where they constantly feel tired, stressed and unproductive as a consequence of working too hard for too long. To prevent this from becoming a problem, make sure you give yourself enough time to switch off.

What can I do?

- Do not take work home with you. Setting this boundary will allow you to separate your work from your home life.

- Get involved with postdoc societies or networks in Edinburgh, allowing you to become more integrated into the city and create useful networks.

- Manage your time and workload and be realistic about the number of responsibilities you can take on.

Time management

Postdocs often have conflicting responsibilities and tasks. It can commonly feel like you do not have enough time to complete everything. By learning time management strategies, you can prevent tasks from piling up and becoming a problem.

What is the cause?

For some people, there may be external causes, for example if the project or PI has unrealistic targets. In this case, the most effective way to prevent the issue is by talking to your PI and discussing your deadlines and responsibilities.

Other people reported that they feel like they need to say yes to everything they are asked to do and/or aim to complete everything to an unrealistically high standard. You don't have to feel this way.

Learn to say no

Don't be afraid to protect your time by not accepting additional responsibilities. Let them know how much time it would take and it would be impossible to complete alongside your current tasks.

Try to take on additional responsibilities only if you know you have time for them, you are truly interested in them or they would help your career development.

Preventing problems Resilience

What can I do?

If you frequently feel overwhelmed by the amount of work you need to do and are not able to complete everything. Reflect on the following time management strategies to investigate whether any would help you.

Plan:

- Set clear and realistic goals: what do you want to achieve today?

- If there's a large task, break it up into achievable chunks.

- What is the most important task?

- Plan to complete quick tasks first.

- Use a public calendar so people know when you are busy (e.g. block 2 hours per day for writing).

Investigate:

- Explore strategies to improve your productivity, such as the Pomodoro Technique® available online and on phone applications.

- Find work environments that work for you. Take advantage of the flexibility of research by spending some time in different locations.

Reflect:

- Keep track of how many productive hours you have worked per day and compare this to the total hours you were in the office/lab.

- Are there patterns in your productivity?
  Plan 'shallow work', such as emails and administrative tasks, when you are usually the least productive.

Case Study Overworking

Research Assistant in the School of Science and Engineering

A case study exploring how reducing you working hours can make you become more productive and focused.

"In my haste to finish my PhD on time, I had forgotten about the importance of having something to look forward to outside of work."

"I know close friends and family working in academia that do it, and I have done it myself. Overworking in academia is ubiquitous. Although for me it mostly came out of necessity that I rarely overwork now, I hope the benefits I have experienced might help people that do overwork to question whether it is necessary and to perhaps consider its effects.

As a PhD student, my lifestyle went somewhat into decline. The late nights got later and the mornings became afternoons. I was spending almost all of my time being concerned with my project. By the time I was writing my thesis, my wellbeing was being affected and I was experiencing alternating periods of low mood from feeling overwhelmed and the highs that came from achieving goals. I was totally focused on my PhD, but despite spending so much time working, I found it hard to be effective. At times I began to question my ability as a result.

Towards the end of writing up, I met the person who became my wife and mother of our son. Meeting someone had the opposite effect on my PhD progress to what one might have initially expected. Instead of becoming a distraction to progress, spending quality time away from my work caused my work to become much more effective. I spent less time working but the time I did spend on it was far more productive. In my haste to finish my PhD on time, I had forgotten about the importance of having something to look forward to outside of work.

A similar contradiction happened when my son was born. I immediately had new responsibilities outside of work and was not able to work when I previously could have. Having more limited hours again resulted in a more focused approach. I am aware that some academics with families still overwork and I suspect that this may often come at a cost. I do at times still struggle with finding the right work-life balance but it has become something that I am aware I have to manage.

With no priority outside of work, it was always too easy to choose work. It is harder to decide to prioritise non-work things but for many people that do overwork, this might be a difficult but very beneficial change."

Preventing problems Resilience

After reading this section, complete the following reflective exercise by answering the questions below.

Reflection

Preventing problems

What issues may arise in my postdoc?

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_____

How can I prevent the problems from occurring?

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Who can help me?

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_____

Working Relationships

Is my PI being supportive?

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Where can I get development support at the University?

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Planning difficult conversations

What do I want to achieve in the conversation?

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How am I going to frame the problem and make them understand where I'm coming from?

_____

Preventing problems Resilience

Reflection

Work-life Balance

Am I balancing work with my home life? Yes/No

What do I want to do outside of work that I have not got around to doing yet?

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_____

Time Management

Do I frequently feel like I have too much to do? Yes/No

What could be the cause(s) of the issue?

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_____

_____

How can I prevent the issue from happening again?

_____

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_____

What time management strategies can I try?

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Reacting to Challenges Resilience

Challenges are inevitable in research. By building resilience, researchers will be able to react positively and learn from these challenges.

Reacting to failure and rejection

It is very rare to find a researcher who has not received rejections in their career. Despite this, receiving rejections and negative feedback can be extremely damaging and feel very personal. It is important that you react well to these rejections so that you continue stretching yourself and putting yourself in challenging situations.

What can I do?

- Focus on what you can learn from your feedback. Treat them as a positive way to learn and advance in your career.

- Read blogs and websites of researchers that you admire; many will discuss their failures and some even write CVs only including rejected papers/ job applications. Accept that failure is part of working life will allow you to improve your resilience.

- Talk to senior staff about their experiences and how they deal with rejections.

- Factor in the chance of rejection. For example, be aware of the low success rate before submitting a grant proposal.

- Consider ways to get around setbacks and have a plan ready so that if one option does not work, you can take a different approach.

Asking for help

The best way to react to some challenges is by asking for help. There is a range of support available to you at the University. However, this support cannot reach you unless you ask for it. Remember that you should enjoy your position and feel like you are getting the most out of it.

What can I do?

Think about the advice/support you need and who is best suited to provide it. Look at pages 28-30 to learn about what support the University and external organisations offer.

Case Study Adam Stevens

Postdoctoral Researcher in the School of Science and Engineering

Adam discusses his strategies for time management and dealing with rejections.

"Criticisms from journal or proposal reviewers can often seem very personal"

"I'm currently a postdoctoral researcher on an STFC Standard Grant. This is my first postdoc after my PhD at the Open University. Before that I completed an MSc at Surrey University and a BSc here at Edinburgh. I also have a PGDE and worked as a Secondary School teacher for several years.

I work in a group of astrobiologists on a number of projects investigating habitability in our solar system. This research is inherently multi-disciplinary which I find gives me a non-standard perspective on research. Given that I work on lots of different projects that often involve completely different skillsets, time management and focus are often a challenge, but I find that previous experience of work outside academia has allowed me to build up strategies that work for me when planning my time. I divide up my days into manageable chunks, planned ahead of time, as I find working in short bursts more effective than a long run at one thing. This does sometimes mean I struggle to shift my 'headspace' between different tasks quite rapidly if they involve different topics, but most of the time I find the change refreshing and re-energising.

Another place where I find my own perspective often contrasts with what my colleagues tell me is in dealing with rejections or harsh criticism, and this partly has to do with my field but also my approach to peer review.

Given the multi-disciplinary nature of our research, my group has a broad knowledge base, but often times we have no one as an 'expert' in a particular thing. We can look outside our group by asking for advice from others around the university, but more often than not, the peer review process is the only way to engage with the experts that can give appropriate feedback. I learned early on in my PhD that while criticisms from journal or proposal reviewers can often seem very personal, if you can take them objectively as feedback that you wouldn't have access to otherwise, they can help make your work much better. This also links to something I see a lot in colleagues where they seem to push towards having a 'perfect' piece of work before sending it out for feedback from anyone external. Perhaps it's naïve, but I feel no shame in submitting a paper that I'm not 100% certain about and using the peer review as a chance for feedback. This mentality also seems prevalent among PhD students when they look at their thesis, and I wonder if it often gets carried over into postdoctoral positions as well, though I don't think I've ever had this outlook."

Reacting to Challenges Resilience

Dealing with insecurity

Early research positions often involve being on fixed short-term contracts. If you join a ready-funded project, the contract could be as short as three months. Being on a short-term contract may mean that you have little time for your own research and development. This can cause worries about where you are going to go next, which will drain your resilience.

What can I do?

Try to believe that if you do well in your current position, you will get another job. Your current PI wants you to succeed and may extend your contract or help you to look for your next position.

Be proactive and plan your next step early. This will enable you to make the most of Edinburgh's career development resources. The Institute for Academic Development, the Careers Service and the Research Support Office run a range of career and skill development workshops to support you.

Contact people who have worked in the department/ institute previously: Where have they gone? What did they do during their postdoc to prepare? Can you see their successful application?

Recognising imposter syndrome

The vast majority of researchers have experienced imposter syndrome in their career. Imposter syndrome involves making you feel like you are not good enough to hold your position. This often feels worse when you put yourself in challenging positions, such as trying new techniques or moving to a new institution. This can prevent researchers from making academic progress as they are less likely to take risks.

What can I do?

A great way to combat imposter syndrome is to talk to other researchers about their experiences.

Try asking for feedback from your PI about how you are progressing so far. Positive feedback is rare in academia so you probably need to ask for it!

Case Study Jill MacKay

Research Fellow at the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies

Jill has suffered from anxiety during her postdoc. While being incredibly challenging, this experience has taught her some important strategies for building her resilience.

"I started as a Research Fellow at the University of Edinburgh in 2016. I'd graduated from Edinburgh with my PhD in 2013, and worked as a lecturer in the intervening years at an associated institute. Like many postdocs, I'm fiercely competitive. I want to be the best. I spent a lot of my time comparing myself to my peers. Have I published an equivalent amount of papers? Have I brought in comparable sums of money? Why did she have an open-ended post while I was still scraping by on endless fixed-term contracts? In my head, I saw a 'perfect postdoc', and I obsessively hunted for points on a scoreboard only I saw.

In 2014, I received help for my overwhelming anxiety from the University of Edinburgh's counselling service. The perfect postdoc would never have needed help, but I did, and admitting this was one of the best decisions I've ever made. My counsellor very kindly helped me realise the role my ego played in my own unhappiness. When I admitted to myself that I was not the best, I no longer felt the need to benchmark my performance against my peers. Truthfully, I no longer needed their failures to feel better about my own. Instead, I started asking what I could learn from them. This was a very painful lesson, and I hope others don't have to go through it. It has given me three top tips for resilience as a postdoc: Community, Perspective and Recognition.

Community I have a great group of friends I did my PhD with, and when we talk about our careers we talk about the good and the bad. Not all of us have stayed in academia, and seeing people happy outside of academia has helped me further break down that mental image of the perfect postdoc.

Perspective It is also important to get a little perspective sometimes. It's hard to dwell on that last rejected paper if you and your pals are at a pub quiz, or exploring new parts of the city. I believe my research is important, and that gives me a huge amount of job satisfaction, but sometimes my friends can remind me it's not all-important. The perfect postdoc would never admit that.

Recognition Thirdly, and perhaps counterintuitively, you need to recognise your achievements. My grandpa told me a story that really resonates with me. As an apprentice metalworker, he was working on a large project. An older smith told him to put his name on the inside and my grandpa refused, believing he'd be credited at the end. He never was, and the project still stands in Glasgow, without his name. The perfect postdoc would have the fawning admiration of all her peers, but the real world doesn't work like that. In academia, you can't expect your colleagues to magically divine the amount of effort you've put in to something. If you receive a compliment, say thank you, but never be afraid to take ownership of your work."

Preventing problems Resilience

Reflection

Instability

What can I do to improve my career prospects?

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Who can support me?

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_____

_____

What is important for me in my job?

_____

_____

What am I willing to compromise in my next job?

_____

_____

What transferable skills do I have from my postdoc?

_____

_____

Do I have connections with anyone in the field/industry that I want to pursue? Yes/No

If not, how can I make connections in the industry I want to pursue?

_____

_____

Preventing problems Resilience

Reflection

Imposter syndrome

Have I ever felt like I do not belong in my position? Yes/No

Who else in my department feels this way?

_____

_____

How do they deal with imposter syndrome?

_____

_____

Asking for help

What can I ask for help for? Who can I ask?

_____

_____

_____

Failure, criticism and rejection

Do I react negatively to criticism and rejection? Yes/No

What did I learn from my last criticism?

_____

_____

Who can I ask for feedback?

_____

_____

Development

Why is development important?

Your postdoc position should not be restricted to your research project. To make the most out of your position, you should take opportunities to gain experiences and develop your skills.

While publications are important for an academic career, it is not true that they are you only goal. Employers want to see that you are becoming assertive, creative and independent. For example, increasing the impact of your project by engaging with a new group is likely to be recognised by funders and will help your project stand out from others.

Additionally, getting involved in activities will improve your transferable skills. Having examples of situations where you demonstrated certain skills is important for entering a career both inside and outside of academia.

Involvement in societies and groups will help you enjoy your time in Edinburgh and create new contacts.

Developing your research

Development

Increase impact

Making your research have a visible impact will help you to:

- Gain satisfaction from your position by inspiring children or teaching adults about what you do and how it will impact the world/them.

- Improve your research. Public engagement often helps researchers step back from their project, and find an overriding messages. This is useful when writing publications and proposals. Public engagement is recognised by many funding bodies.

- Develop your skills. You'll have the opportunity to develop new skills, such as communication skills when talking to lay audiences or visual design when advertising.

What can I do?

There are many ways to increase your impact, including the Beltane Network.

Stretch yourself

This table demonstrates how pressure influences performance. Everyone should aim to spend most of their time in the 'stretch zone'. This allows you to be motivated in your role, learn new skills and be on the forefront of research.

Zone	Pressure	Performance	Examples
Comfort zone	Low	Low	Reflection, boredom, relaxed
Stretch zone	Mid	High	Creative, exciting, new skills, ambitious, ground-breaking, achievable goals
Panic zone	High	Low	Stressed, overworking, disheartened, strain, unrealistic goals

Being in the 'comfort zone' is important too, as this gives you space to reflect on your experiences. Spending too much time in the 'comfort zone', however, can lead to losing enthusiasm about your project, not developing skills and become less likely to take risks.

It is important to remember that everyone's zones are different. For example, one person may panic about giving a conference presentation but it may be second nature to another person.

What can I do?

I'm in the comfort zone There are a lot of opportunities in the University; take initiative, get involved and ask for more responsibilities. For example, if you are currently focusing on publishing papers from your PhD thesis, try to get involved with current research projects in the department/institute or follow up some unanswered questions from your PhD.

I'm in the panic zone Step-back and gain perspective on your position and your responsibilities. Talk to colleagues in your department for support.

Developing your research

Development

Be creative

Creativity drives academic development; without creative and original approaches and ideas, there would be few advancements in academia. While creative thinking cannot be taught directly, creative activities can help you tap into your creativity and learn to use it in your research.

What can I do?

- Ask questions

- Read about research in different fields that are related to yours in some way.

- Divergent thinking

- Note down your ideas. Whether this is in a blog or notebook, it'll help you remember you ideas and probe you to develop them further into more polished ideas.

- Give yourself time to think

- Ways to be creative include substituting, modifying and adapting ideas.

Become a leader

Leaderships skills will be crucial for your research project(s) and your career. You can begin developing your leadership skills before you have a leadership role or look for positions in the University which will help you develop your skills.

What can I do?

You can take small steps to gain leadership skills:

- Supervise students

- Have influence over your project by being independent and voicing ideas.

- Be assertive in meetings by encouraging others to be positive and remain on task.

- Take on new responsibilities, such as getting involved in a postdoc society or an organisation role for a conference.

Developing your research

After reading this section, complete the following reflective exercise by answering the questions below.

Reflection

Increase impact

What audience would be most interested in my work? How can I engage with them?

_____

_____

What is the overarching message of my research?

_____

_____

Stretch yourself

Do I feel stretched in my position? Yes/No

What am I learning in my job?

_____

_____

What would I like to learn?

_____

_____

_____

How can I avoid being in the panic and comfort zones?

_____

_____

Be creative

Am I creative in my research? Yes/No

How can I become more creative in my role?

_____

_____

Developing your career

Development

Be assertive

People working on your project may have different motivations to you. For example, your PI is likely to want to gain publications, whereas you may be more interested in teaching or developing technical skills for industry. It is important that you take initiative and negotiate with your PI so that you can get what you want out of your postdoc position.

What can I do?

Reflect on why you became a postdoc researcher. What was your goal for the position? Then explore what you would like to get out of your position and talk to your PI about how you can achieve this.

Use networks

Networks are important in academia and may help you get feedback on your ideas, form collaborations and hear about jobs.

Integrating into Edinburgh's communities is crucial for gaining experiences and developing a support network. People can help support you in a range of ways; hearing people's experiences will help you learn about academia and how they deal with challenges, and meeting people outside of the university will allow you to enjoy your free time.

What can I do?

Find the researchers in your field that you can contact if you have any questions or ideas relating to what they are interested in. Attend events and conferences to meet people in similar disciplines to you.

Research the groups and communities in Edinburgh to see which interest you and get involved in their events.

Developing your career

Development

Develop your skills

The 70:20:10 model was developed by McCall, Lombardo and Eichinger is now a common framework for skill development. It highlights that 70% of your knowledge will be learned on the job, 20% through interactions and 10% through formal training.

This shows that you do not need to spend all of your time attending training courses. But it is important that you are actually developing your skills when you are working; do not stay in your comfort zone but look for new methods and software you can use to improve your skills and research.

Technical skills are very important if you want to move into industry. Certain companies look for specific technical and accredited courses.

%	70	20	10
Learning through	On-the-job experiences	Interactions	Formal training
Examples	• Problem solving • Research project • Supervising • Teaching	• PI or team meetings • Mentoring • Feedback • Annual review	• Workshops • Seminars • Technical training • Self-study courses

What can I do?

Focus on a few skills that you would like to develop. Think about how you can develop them individually, with peers and in workshops.

Research what skills employers in your field are looking for. You can find ways to develop soft skills on the job by taking new responsibilities. Look at technical training courses and funding across the University to support you.

Case Study Antonis Asiminas

Postdoctoral Researcher in the College of medicine and veterinary medicine.

Antonis discusses the difficulties of staying in the same institution for their PhD and postdoc.

"After completing a PhD in Edinburgh, I remained in the same lab as a postdoctoral researcher. I had a clear advantage of being more productive than a postdoc moving to a new institution/country. Additionally, I didn't need any adjustment period where I was proving my abilities; people knew what I'm capable of and automatically gave me independence to take on new initiatives.

On the other hand, staying in the same lab/institution that I completed my PhD in is a very tricky situation for a number of reasons:

1) It is easy to stay in a PhD-postdoc limbo phase dealing with follow-up experiments from my PhD

2) Extra effort is needed in order to carefully plan how to learn new techniques and form collaborations within and outside the university

3) I want to stay here as I like the city and for family reasons but being institutionalised makes me less employable.

For anyone in the same situation as me, having to deal with these issues is not easy; I believe the key is to make sure you develop a scientific profile over time, and most importantly one that is distinct from that of your PhD and postdoctoral advisers. Be proactive and assertive in networking with people in your field as this can lead to new collaborations, which could help you follow new research directions within your department.

Applying for an independent postdoctoral fellowship is also a key step in order to grow as an independent researcher. This will give you the opportunity to carefully plan a project and identify key researchers in different institutions, who are using techniques that your home institution doesn't have. By collaborating with these researchers, you can contribute to the flow of new knowledge coming in your home institution.

Your research question should fit with the university/research institute's interests but it should be unique in its approach (not only in terms of techniques but in terms of concept as well). In that way, you are creating your own niche, which is the Holy Grail in the academic world.

During your postdoc, take on responsibilities outside of your research; supervise as many MSc and PhD students as possible –that's a good experience; try to be involved in paper reviewing –that can help you grow as a scientist and will help you think about the way you design your experiments; try to write as many grant applications as possible - it is good practice plus it looks good to have a record of acquiring funds for your research. Moreover, try to get as much experience as possible in public engagement; this has been very rewarding for me, as it allows you to strip your research down to the basics and create a message.

All and all, as long as you make sure that it is clearly visible by the end of your postdoctoral years that you are an independent researcher with your own ideas and identity, you are going to be just fine. While there appears to be an unwritten rule whereby academia requires mobility, I know a few people who have managed to stay in the same place pretty much for their entire career so it is definitely not impossible. "

Developing your career

After reading this section, complete the following reflective exercise by answering the questions below.

Reflection

Be assertive

What do I want to get out of my postdoc?

_____

How can I achieve this?

_____

_____

Use networks

How can I connect with people in my field?

_____

_____

What networks in Edinburgh can I engage with?

_____

_____

Develop your skills

What 3 skills would I like to develop and how can I develop them (e.g. communication skills could be developed through presenting at a conference)?

_____

_____

_____

Become a leader

What qualities are important in a good leader?

_____

How can I demonstrate my leadership skills?

_____

_____

Your next step

It is important to realise that not many academics follow a traditional academic career path. Due to the lack of positions and the competitiveness of the field, research staff are taking 'jobs to survive' instead of strategically choosing jobs to create a career. Depending on the discipline, it may take between 5-10 years until you find a permanent job, if at all.

Pursing an academic career:

Support:

IAD careers support

The University of Oxford's Centre for Excellence and a network of universities created a useful resource for new academics.

Vitae: Pursuing an Academic Career

Vitae: career development for researchers resource

Vitae: Examples of academic CV's

Workshops most relevant to you:

- CV Briefing session
- Creating CVs for Careers beyond academia

Advice from lecturers at the University of Edinburgh

Keep in touch with researchers you have worked with – they'll come in handy. Learn about their experiences and how they got there

You have to want an academic career, it's not enough for a lectureship to be the next step

Ask people more questions. Work out what they like talking about, then go to them if you want to ask anything about that topic

Prepare for interviews – don't waste the opportunity

Don't feel guilty about taking holidays, even if you feel guilty about it, but you need it

Read 'The professor is in' by Karen Kelsky; it helped me become more assertive. I don't think I'd have got my lectureship without reading it

No matter how much you prepare, you won't feel ready for your first tenure job

THE PROFESSOR IS IN

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO TURNING YOUR PH.D INTO A JOB

KAREN KELSKY, PH.D.
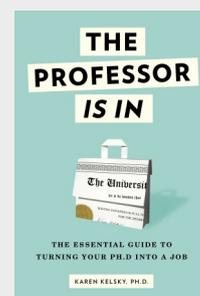
Pursuing a career outside academia

Whether you want to go into industry or follow a different career path entirely, it is important to remember that you are not alone and your postdoc will prepare you for a range of rewarding positions. Many of your peers will be considering a career outside of academia and happy to support you. There is also a range of support for you from the University.

Workshops most relevant to you:

- Career Development Workshops

Online support:

Vitae has a range of case studies which demonstrate researcher's transitions from academia.

Research Councils UK has a range of case studies separated by discipline focusing on the directions previous researchers have followed.

Prosper Portal has a range of former postdoc case studies for inspiration and also a Career Clusters resource aimed at broadening your knowledge of sectors and roles within the wider economy.

Advice from postdocs planning a career outside of academia

You have developed a range of skills in your research. While they may not be apparent to you straight away, think about what you have learned, how this would help you in industry, and think of examples

Develop academic and industrial networks

Be positive and make the move early

Look at what technical skills your employers will want – make an effort to undergo technical and accredited training to gain these skills.

Recognise that losing your academic identity will be difficult. It'll take time to adapt to your new role and working environment.

Try to get different experiences as a postdoc (e.g. don't work for same PI for 10 years)

Engage with the IAD Careers Service early to get the most support

Case Study Robert Truswell

Lecturer in the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences

Robert discusses his transition from his postdoc positions to his full time lecturing position at Edinburgh.

About me I went from a PhD at University College London to a 1-year postdoc at Tufts University in Boston (2007-8), then three years as a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow in Edinburgh (2008-11), and three years as Assistant Professor at the University of Ottawa (2011-14). My job in Ottawa was a tenure-track job, but I made the decision in 2014 to come back to Edinburgh as a Chancellor's Fellow (which is roughly halfway between postdoc and lecturer). In 2017, my position has just been converted to a permanent lectureship.

At Tufts, the only expectation was that I would interact with the other members, be interesting, and make the most of Boston's incredibly rich academic community. I had finished my PhD in under three years, because of lack of money, and I consider Tufts to be where I really matured as an academic and did all the things that had been pushed to the side as a PhD student.

Because Tufts was a 1-year position, my first priority was to apply for jobs for the following year. That took the bulk of my energy for several months, but by spring I had my next move planned, and could at least get a few months' solid work done and push out a few papers.

Edinburgh was different: I was on a 3-year individual fellowship, and I had time to breathe and be ambitious. At the time, I don't think I realized how lucky I was to have had four years with relatively little pressure. In other positions, I would probably have done more, but worse.

I am probably quite unusual in that I took a step away from the security (and high salary) of an assistant professorship in Canada, to be in a more research-intensive environment. The department in Ottawa was great in many respects, and very supportive of me, but the research time of lecturers is constantly eroded by the tyranny of the urgent over the important, and my wife encouraged me to sacrifice that stability and money for a last stretch of relatively unencumbered research time. Now I'm a lecturer, I'll only get that freedom again whenever a sabbatical rolls around. But I'm not complaining, of course.

How I got my positions For both my postdocs and for my Ottawa professorship, I applied for everything going that I could even vaguely imagine working out. Across the three rounds of applications, I believe I applied for 70 jobs and was offered 6. That seems about typical in my area.

My Ottawa interview came after a string of disastrous interviews. I had a Skype interview at NYU, where one of the interviewers was barely audible and half-visible, and another was himself Skyping in on a laptop placed in front of the camera. I was rattled by the weird communicative situation and gave a poor account of myself. I was jetlagged and underprepared for my interview at Stanford and Pomona College, and also frankly intimidated by the prospect of little me having a job at Stanford. The interviews weren't terrible, but they weren't great and again weren't really representative of my abilities, and in a field this competitive, that's enough to rule anyone out.

Case Study Robert Truswell

Lecturer in the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences

Robert discusses his transition from his postdoc positions to his full time lecturing position at Edinburgh.

Ottawa instantly felt different. I had had a good rapport over email with the head of department at the time, I was at home in the bilingual environment (all professors are expected to offer undergraduate classes in both English and French), and I really wanted a job in an interesting, confident young department not so far from my girlfriend in Montreal. I went to Montreal for a few days, relaxed, and prepared for the 2-day Ottawa interview process. En route, I lost my passport, which I think was a blessing in disguise: a lot of my nervous energy was directed towards making sure I could get back out of the country, running to meetings at the British High Commission between interviews in the university, and it made for a good talking point. I left Ottawa thinking that little had gone wrong in two days, and that (for the first time) if I didn't get the job, it was because they wanted someone else rather than because I hadn't done my best.

Having the security of the Ottawa position significantly changed matters when applying for the Edinburgh Chancellor's Fellow position. I was relaxed because I didn't need the job and didn't seriously expect to get it. After the job talks, I recognized one of my competitors in the pub. I thought I had no chance against her, as one of the most exciting linguists in my generation, so I relaxed further in the interviews the next day. In the end, we were both offered jobs.

Advice to current postdocs I think that as a postdoc I wasted a lot of time trying to be brilliant. Individual postdocs, as opposed to working for a PI, are rare and precious things, but they did lead me to spend too much time trying to show that I had the ambition and ability to justify my status. That kind of ambition can be crippling.

At heart, I think that reveals a problem with confidence in myself as a researcher. I think that I finally have the knack of doing good work by trying to do good work, rather than tying myself in knots by trying to be brilliant, and I will probably never again apply for a job that I don't really want. If I could have started like that, I would have saved myself a lot of time and stress.

I think postdocs in general should try to see themselves in this way. Most people don't go to university, and those that do don't typically go on to do a PhD. Among PhD students, many quit academia. Postdocs are already elite academics, and it's easy to forget that given the sometimes precarious nature of life as a postdoc. Although there's a sense in which we are all competing for the same positions, we are all individually brilliant, or we wouldn't have got this far. Our individual brilliance is only a small part of what gets us our next jobs.

With that in mind, it's important to remember that postdocs are typically very research-intensive positions, but research will only be a minor part of a lectureship (1/3 of your time on paper if you're lucky, less in real life for sure). If you can, try to develop a broad CV while working as a postdoc. Teach, so you have teaching evaluations and a teaching philosophy. Participate in committees to the extent that your department will let you. Get a taste for outreach and knowledge exchange, because that's what your employers seem to want these days. Those things will count for much more than one more paper on your CV.

Developing your career

After reading this section, complete the following reflective exercise by answering the questions below.

Reflection

Career in academia

What are your motivations for going into academia (e.g. passion for subject, independence in research, flexibility)?

_____

_____

What is important for you in your job?

_____

What are you willing to compromise?

_____

Which contacts will help me understand what academia is like in my discipline?

_____

Do I understand the REF and TEF? Yes/ No

Career outside academia

What is your motivation for going into industry/ an alternative career direction? (e.g. stability, more time for family)

_____

_____

Which transferable skills do you have from your PhD and research position(s)?

_____

_____

 What connections do you have with industry? (e.g. can you contact anyone who used to work in your department/lab?)

_____

What challenges do you foresee and how will you overcome these?

_____

Support

What support is available to me?

The aim of this guide has been to highlight a range of skills and activities to enable you to make the most out of your research position. Reflecting on your experiences so far and completing the reflective exercises may have made you realise that you need further support to reach your goals.

This section outlines some of the main staff support services across the University. If you would rather seek support from outside of the University, we also present a range of external services and charities to support you.

Support in the University

The Institute for Academic Development (IAD)

The IAD runs a range of workshops allowing staff to develop skills including writing and management and more. Certificates are provided after completion of some workshops, providing useful evidence for skill development.

- IAD for Research Staff

- Courses and Events

- Brochure for research staff illustrates the Research Development Framework and highlights workshops relevant for Early Career Researchers.

- Beltane Public Engagement Network also runs within IAD. The Beltane Network aims to embed a culture of doing high quality public engagement in its partner universities. The Network currently organises The Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas.

- Staff development materials for teaching staff

Staff Mentoring

Mentoring Connections is an opt-in scheme allowing early career staff to receive support from someone over an extended period of time in relation to career progress and aspirations. Mentors are usually senior staff members and are usually in a similar discipline to the mentee (subject to availability).

Edinburgh Research Office

Edinburgh Research Office offers a range of support through their events. Their website also contains a toolkit and a range of online guides about different funders. These generally include information, eligibility criteria and current funding opportunities.

Staff counselling Service

The Staff Counselling Service offers eligible staff members short-term counselling. All staff are eligible for an assessment appointment and then offered short term counselling if this is agreed to be appropriate. These sessions offers staff the opportunity to discuss problems or situations, which are causing concern or distress either at work or home. Counselling aims to look at all aspects of a problem in order to find better ways of managing personal development.The Staff Counselling Service is confidential and runs completely separately from the student service. A range of self-help materials is available online, including websites and books.

From September 2017, all staff will gain access to an online support resource. The Big White Wall is a safe and anonymous online forum where staff can share their challenges and pressures. Participants can receive peer support from users facing similar issues or receive help from trained professionals.

www.ed.ac.uk/iad

Support in the University

IAD Careers Service

The Careers Service provides career development support for research assistants and associates, post-docs, and research fellows, as well as teaching assistants and teaching fellows.

- A range of workshops run for staff, covering topics including CV Briefings, Changing Direction and Academic Interviews. These workshops cover important topics, allow staff to hear other people's experiences and gain confidence when planning their career.

- One-to-one consultations are available (please check availability) to discuss your career options, gain practical advice about a CV or application (non-specific to discipline) and undertake mock-interviews.

- Early Career Researchers are also encouraged to attend the PhD Horizons Career Conference. This is an annual event run in June, where a range of previous PhD students and post-doc staff discuss what they did next. Many people say that skills they developed in research were useful in their career and valued by employers. employers have valued the skills they learned in research and were useful in their career.

Advice to postdoc staff from the IAD Careers Service:

1. Start planning your next step early (remember, you cannot use the career service once your contract has ended)

2. Start thinking about your career. How are you going to develop your skills to be as competitive as possible?

3. Try to get different experiences as a postdoc staff. Try collaborating with new people and spending time learning skills/techniques in other institutions.

Networks and Communities

There are a range of Research Staff Societies and communities across the city and University.

- Postdoc Staff Societies
- Communities & Networking in Edinburgh

Support in the University

The Chaplaincy

The Chaplaincy is a safe and welcoming space for everyone. It has been described as 'a place to go to for those who seek or stumble upon it, as a familiar friend or a brand new ally, a champion of broadmindedness' (*The Student* newspaper), and 'the coolest place ever,' having 'a real sense of community because it's like nowhere else' (past EUSA VPS).

An aim of the Chaplaincy is to give students and staff the opportunity to 'slow down' their university experience for reflection to discern how best to be to be actively and healthily involved in the university. For example, mindfulness courses aim to help staff to respond creatively to stress and challenges. A range of other mindfulness and wellbeing events also run, including Tai Chi and Yoga sessions, and in the new academic year, there'll be mindful doodling included. A growing element for all of this has been the series of events entitled *What's the University For?* in which we have been able to explore some of the key themes of university life.

The Chaplaincy also runs pastoral support for staff and opportunities to connect with others and build supportive community around issues of importance: see the Chaplaincy web site for details and ongoing groups. Beyond and around all of these, there's the space to identify and develop your talents (Go Live Your Strengths) towards focusing on your work, decide on your next move, or just to develop personally.

Staff Quote:

"Go Live Your Strengths and the chaplaincy have helped me figure out what to do with work, work/life balance and life in general. Go Live Your Strength's approach helped me to structure my thoughts and purposely turn them into next actions. I would highly recommend the approach to others who need a bit of help to get closer connected to their inner selves."

Technical Support

Information Services offers a range of technical services to aid your research, including:

- IS helpline is the first port of call to resolve any technical problems.
- Research Data Service supports researchers from the planning process up to securing the data once it has been collected
- Research Publications Service supports researchers who are ready to publish. They ensure that you get the best deal, including providing advice about copyright.
- Linked In Learning is an online skills development service offering an extensive library of high - quality video courses in business, creative and technical skills. The University of Edinburgh has a campus -wide licence, offering staff and students unlimited access to the service via the web .

External support

There are many external organisations and charities that can support you well-being and resilience. Some of these are listed here. Many provide 24/7 confidential guidelines for you to get immediate support.

Professional Development

'The Professor is In' by Karen Kelsky has been highly recommended by researchers at the University. You can access Kelsky's 'Pearls of Wisdom' blog for free.

'What Every Postdoc Needs to Know' by Liz Elvidge (Imperial College London, UK), Carol Spencely (University of Surrey, UK) and Emma Williams (EJW Solutions Ltd, UK) has been recommended by a postdoc. This includes case studies from the authors, exercises and a range of information about academia.

Wellbeing and mental health

Mind is the UK's main mental-health charity and provides advice and support for anyone experiencing mental-health issues. Their website includes advice, information and contact details for you to talk to a team member.

The Samaritans run a helpline which you can use no matter how big or small the problem. You can phone them anytime on 116 123.

The Scottish Association for Mental Health provides a range of guides and self-help resources to improve mental health. They outline the 5 Ways to Better Mental Health and small steps you can take to support your wellbeing.

Breathing Space provides a confidential helpline to call if you are feeling worried, depressed or anxious. They also offer a BSL service at specified times.

The Mental Health Foundation produces a range of online support, including case studies, tips and guides.

Action for Happiness aims to people live happier lives and a more caring society. They apply cutting-edge research to take practical action and make a difference. There are a range of online-resources, including podcasts and advice, along with links to courses and support.

The National Health Service (NHS) runs stress control courses which are designed to help people understand the psychological aspects of stress and learn how to cope better with stress in their lives.