



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
Careers Service

Supporting supervisors to develop the careers of postgraduate students

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Today...

- Background
- What we have done at the University of Edinburgh
- Issues
- The way forward / discussion





Why are we talking about this?

Career intentions: Over 60% PhD students envisage a career in academia
(PRES 2015)

Career outcomes: 3.5% PhD graduates become 'permanent research staff'
(Royal Society 2010)

We need to equip PhD students to compete in academia

Not all PhD students want an academic job

We need to prepare PhD graduates for a wider range of careers





The so-called Oxford Statement (2015) noted that:

As creators of new knowledge, new insights and new approaches, doctoral award holders are highly intelligent, highly skilled and extremely versatile. It is recognised that such individuals can successfully enter a broad range of careers. Doctorate holders make a substantial contribution to the skilled workforce essential for the knowledge economies of the 21st century.

UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE)





The Principal Supervisor or Lead Supervisor is responsible for providing help and advice to the student on:

- Research training
- Choice of topic
- Organising the research
- Identifying any specific training needs
- Feedback on written work and any other component of the research
- Pastoral support.

The Principal Supervisor meets regularly with the student, leads the student through the process of producing the thesis and its examination, reminds the student of time constraints, and checks that the thesis conforms to the University's requirements. Meetings may be conducted online or via teleconferencing. **The Supervisor will be able to offer advice and direct the student to sources of information about future careers.** Comprehensive careers guidance is available from the Careers Service.

***Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students
University of Edinburgh***





What have we done?

- Developed web pages dedicated to PhD supervisors – feedback from supervisors
- ‘Careers support for PhD students’ leaflet for academic and support staff – shared at School level
- Publicise resources at compulsory supervisor briefings (light touch)
- Academic career videos – some focus on supporting research students and staff





Inspiring futures

CAREERS SERVICE

Careers Service home

Information for University staff 

Supporting your students 

Support for PhD Supervisors

Developing your PhD's academic career

Exploring non-academic career options

Applications and Interviews

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Contact us

Support for PhD Supervisors

Information and resources for PhD supervisors to help you support your PhD students including academic and non academic careers and support with applications and interviews

Developing your PhD's academic career

This page gives you some ideas about the range of support available that your PhD student can access.

Exploring non-academic career options

PhD graduates enter a wide variety of career areas. This section explains how you can help your student explore the options available to them.

Applications and Interviews

Applications and interviews for academic and non-academic jobs can be quite different. This page outlines support for whatever applications your PhD students make.

Linked from supervisor support and guidance pages – Institute of Academic Development



Exploring non-academic career options an extract from our website

Why PhDs need your support

Students can be apprehensive about discussing non-academic careers with their supervisor, fearing they come across as lacking commitment to their research. An open, supportive conversation can help to:

- Articulate why they are considering a non-academic career
- Dispel any misconceptions about the academic / research career route
- Identify strengths developed through their research which they can apply to a future career, whether in academia or elsewhere
- Note any skills which may be under-developed and encourage them to look for opportunities to develop them
- Encourage them to think about career options linked to their research but outside higher education





Academic Careers: Being supported

Stuart Gilfillan
(Chancellor's Fellow)

How do you support the career development of your research students and staff?

*So I mean there's a very **strong framework** in touch for PhD students so their progress gets checked throughout the time and it's basically taking the time through those meetings to step aside from the project ... and talk about their development.....*

Dr Stuart Gilfillan

Help those I supervise to manage their time effectively to prioritise key things that will enable their career progression....Use review processes to help those I supervise think about career paths and how they want to progress...Offer honest advice about experience of careers, to help people to think in more detail about career progression and next stages.

Dr Janet Fisher

If people want to stay in research then I I'm obviously better equipped to help them with careers advice. But I know a lot of people who have moved out of science as well and I will always put people in touch with friends and past colleagues who who've done other things. And I just try and make sure that people develop as many skills as they possibly can while they're in my lab

Professor Cathy Abbott





What are the issues?

- Inconsistency of practice across the University
- Culture / resistance to change
- Lack of time / academic work pressures
- Openness to non-academic career conversations / expectations of supervisor
- Expertise, availability and knowledge of resources





One student's view

“I think that there should be career development support - either in the form of a 'pastoral' advisor, who is **deliberately unrelated to the research project** who can provide general support on training, publication, etc. Or in terms of training that covers skills identification, and gaps in skills profiles, so that students can gage for themselves where they need to turn. At the moment, there is a huge disconnect between the act of doing a research degree and that of obtaining and performing well at a research job.”

PRES 2015





What should good practise look like?

- Embedded** an integral part of the PhD student lifecycle
- Supported** guidelines and resources available to equip supervisors
- Owned** responsibility lies with both supervisor and student
- Monitored** some form of recording to ensure conversations are taking place
- Evaluated** not just a tick box exercise, some indicator of quality





For discussion

Who is the right person to be having career conversations with their PhD students? Is it the supervisor?

- What are the benefits?
- What may the challenges be?

How can we support effective career conversations?

- Structure
- Resources

What good practise exists elsewhere?





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