

Postdocs: *Stepping up in science*

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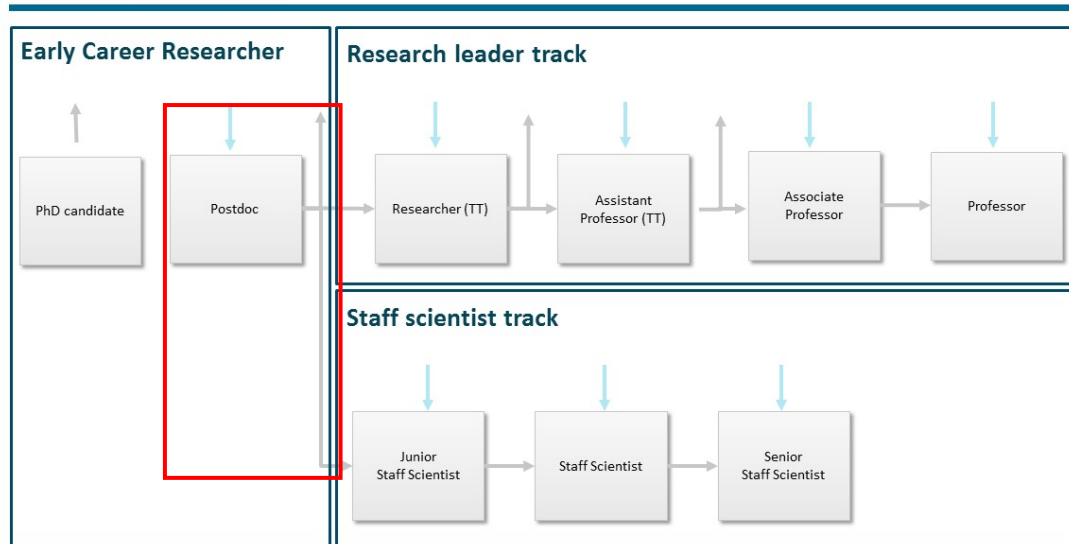
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1. Scientific career path and postdoc program

For many young people, who do a Ph.D. or postdoc, an academic career is a professional goal they aspire. However, only a fraction of them can obtain a permanent position at university, most others become fact-based problem-solvers elsewhere in society with excellent career perspectives. This reality asks for a broader perspective of postdoctoral researchers as well as their supervisors because the academic career is often seen as the default option with a non-transparent and non-linear path towards a long-term academic position for a few ones.

Scientific career paths



Radboudumc
university medical center

Scientific career path policy of the Radboudumc embraces the postdoc development by describing transparent guiding principles, setting a clear program from the start of the postdoc period to the next steps, and offering all necessary information and support for postdocs and their supervisors.

2. Postdoc policy

The scientific career path policy acknowledges this reality and provides a framework for a transparent and fair path towards independent academic, healthcare professional, staff scientist, or experts in our globalized community. It considers distinct talents, individualized training, the need for leadership and internationalization, and a fair selection and promotion process that applies transparent criteria covering more factors than simple bibliographic or grant metrics. In short, it is a leap forward in contemporary human resource management for academic personnel.

In this way we fulfill a central role in our society, we nurture the best scientists within academia and prepare the next generation of responsible leaders that shape our societies with innovative solutions based on facts and analysis while limiting biases and preoccupations. Thus, we aim at attracting young academics and accelerating their academic career while they are working with us.

Postdocs are defined as early career researchers (up to about 8 years after their PhD) with a **temporary appointment at the Radboudumc** based on their own funding or the group leader's grant funding. The postdoc phase is crucial for the advancement to "independent research leader". However, only a small number of postdocs can make this step. Therefore, the idea is to facilitate less competition based on a realistic chance of becoming an independent research leader by timely supporting the young candidates at all levels of decision-making (by postdoc and supervisor). Furthermore, the policy envisages that some work that is now often done by postdocs in regard to keeping and developing methodological skills is done by staff scientists with permanent contracts and therefore offering another career perspective for postdocs.

Postdocs are usually recruited externally by research group leaders and their team. The postdoc program of the Institute will support group leaders regarding recruitment, selection and placement. In addition, the Stepin' up program will comprehensively support external and internal candidates to obtain a (personal) grant (e.g. fellowship) to finance a stay here or elsewhere (in- and outgoing mobility). According to the Scientific career path policy, it needs to be clear from the start that only a limited number of our postdocs will continue in a Tenure track (to develop independence, WP Leadership) or Staff scientist (WP Research support) position within Radboudumc. Most postdocs will continue in academic research, healthcare or in a diverse set of positions elsewhere.

As the policy finds diversity and mobility of high importance, postdocs (as well as PhD candidates) are encouraged to discover their interests, research area and own talents in different environments. This experience is crucial in their decision-making towards further career steps. In this critical moment in their career, the postdocs and their supervisors are offered full support from the Research Institute to make this well-considered decision.

An important principle of the Scientific career path policy is that postdoc is in charge of his/her career, guided and supported by the supervisor. Radboudumc facilitates this process as an employer by offering transparent prospects for the future and appropriate development opportunities for postdocs and tools for the supervisors. For this reason, the policy divides the starting points into three clear phases: at the start of the postdoc trajectory, during the development of the postdoc, and when the postdoc moves to his/her next step at the end of the trajectory.

Guiding principles of Postdoc policy are

Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The recruitment and selection process will be optimized to attract the motivated and talented postdocs through a transparent recruitment and selection process, preferably based on their own funding or fellowships.- The support can be offered during the grant acquisition (e.g. MCSA, Veni....)- From the start, it is clear to the postdoc and his/her supervisor that this career step should be seen in a broader perspective, given the limited positions for promotion to group leader within the Radboudumc- The professionalization of the selection will be offered by looking at both the match with the position and the match with the research group, including collaboration as a fixed selection criterion and broadening the selection committee for greater objectivity.
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The professional and personal development of our postdocs is aimed at explicit attention to employability: development of personal and professional leadership- The postdocs are informed that opportunities for promotion within the Radboudumc are limited in terms of academic leadership and staff scientist positions- They take responsibility for their careers, they have a proactive attitude, appropriate to their career stage (independence/visibility).- It is a prerequisite that supervisors have the right conviction, skills, and tools to provide and facilitate postdocs with customized career guidance in a motivating way. They actively encourage postdocs to make time for their career development.
End of contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Grant support for outgoing mobility (Steppin's up fellowship..)- Support for postdocs and their supervisors in making the next step, within or outside Radboudumc- Networking support- Outplacement, external job opportunities- Alumni policy will be developed

3. Roles of the postdoc & the supervisor

3.1 Postdoc

- Is in charge of his/her career
- Is responsible for his/her professional and personal development
- Knows his/her talents and competencies and is eager to take the next steps (utilizing Personal Development Plan (PDP- see below, courses, grants...)
- Is part of a research group, bringing the necessary expertise and leadership
- Is a valued team member, as shown from the group assessment (as described in WP Leadership)
- Actively participates in the research and education activities of his/her research group and connected research program(s)
- Seeks support @Institute in all necessary issues
- Participates in Radboudumc research community and beyond (also Internationally)

3.2 Supervisor

- A postdoc is selected by research GROUP according to specific criteria set and needs by the group, and general criteria set by the institute (facilitated by e-assessment)

- Values the talents and competencies of the postdoc
- Stimulates professional and personal development of the postdoc (utilizing PDP in annual appraisal), gives space where needed and guidance where necessary
- Yearly discusses the next steps, is transparent about the career prospects, and facilitates the decision-making process of postdoc
- Gives the career development of the postdoc all necessary attention
- Seeks support @Institute in all necessary issues

4. Role of the Institute

To put the abovementioned principles into practice, several tools and activities specifically for postdocs have been already developed during the implementation phase, or are currently under development. To make these activities more visible for postdocs and their supervisors, and to provide a clear point of contact for the group of postdocs, the implementation team proposed to establish a **Postdoc & Career office**, which is currently being formed. Postdoc & career office will offer support by number of activities, some in development and some already in place, as outlined here:

Phase	Tools and activities	State of affairs
Start		
	Marie Curie Fellowship support (incoming)	Available as pilot
	Grant Support (e.g. VENI, KWF...)	Available
	E-assessment for selection	Available
	Postdoc Competencies - overview	Available
	Introduction for postdocs	Plan - October 2021
	Personal development plan (PDP)	Developed, start @ introduction
Development		
	Peer coaching /mentoring	Can start upon request
	Projectmanagement for researchers	Developed as a module, pilot
	Supervision for supervisors	Developed as a module, pilot
	Overview available courses and workshops	In alignment with OLO/RU
	Personal leadership	Available
	Self-assessment tool	Available
	Talent development option: Galilei track	Available, will be moved to TT
	Talent development option: Da Vinci Challenge	Under discussion
End of contract		
	Marie Curie Fellowship support (outgoing)	Available as pilot
	Career workshop "Next step in my career"	Available 3x in 2021
	Career counseling	Available
	Individual job orientation support	Available
	Networking	Available
	Selection procedure towards Tenure Track position	In preparation
	Selection procedure towards Staf scientist position	In preparation
	Alumni policy	In planning
	Exit meetings/survey	In planning, after start Office

General		
	Postdoc & career office	In formation
	Communication in general: Website	Under construction
	Communication to postdocs	A.s.a.p.
	Communication to supervisors	A.s.a.p.
	Grant support office	Available
	Internalization office	Available
	Community: RPI (Radboud Postdoc Initiative)	Available

5. Extra information

5.1 Postdoc implementation plan: Postdoc & career office _ WCP July 2020

5.2 Link to the Postdoc website (*in preparation*):

<https://www.radboudumc.nl/en/preview/1a5d47da-8901-45a8-bcd8-5d4a4f9a9f0e>

5.3 Blog “Redefining scientific career paths: why is it happening and what does it mean for young researchers?” by Özlem Bulut

<https://www.radboudumc.nl/en/news/2021/a-glimpse-on-redefining-scientific-career-paths>

5.4 OECD: “Reducing the precarity of academic research careers”

https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/science-and-technology/reducing-the-precarity-of-academic-research-careers_0f8bd468-en#wrapper