

Career Consultations for the Postdoc Phase

Laufbahngespräche für
die Postdoc-Phase



1. Discussion guidelines for taking up a new position



2. Career consultations for the postdoc phase



The guidelines are also available online at: www.uni-osnabrueck.de/zepros

To help you find your way around the document, recommendations and instructions relating to the individual sections in the text are marked as follows:

Important



Help



Postdoc

Surname, Name:

Superior/Dialogue Partner

Surname, Name:

Other Participants (where applicable)

(e.g. other representatives from the status group of university professors from within the relevant school)

Surname, Name:



Preamble

Osnabrück University provides its postdocs and the professors supervising them with these guidelines – Career Consultations for the Postdoc Phase – as the basis for discussions to take place between them about careers planning once doctoral candidates have completed their PhD.

The abundance of potential career pathways and additional qualifications open to postdocs upon completing their PhD means that consultations that take place between the postdocs and their professors (and peers) are a key part of the support that Osnabrück University can offer them, irrespective of the degree of academic autonomy they have already attained.

The career consultations for the postdoc phase are therefore a cornerstone of Osnabrück University's concept for supporting young academics¹, which has three main aims: (1) to reinforce a sense of **responsibility** for young academics at all levels, (2) to give young academics a sense of **orientation** regarding to their career options, and (3) to deliver **transparency** throughout the whole process of their academic qualification and training.

These discussion guidelines are divided into two sections:

Part 1: Discussion guidelines for taking up a new position

Part 2: Career consultations for the postdoc phase

The aim of these discussion guidelines is first to outline the general circumstances which exist when a postdoc takes up a new job and the expectations of both the professor and postdoc, in order to provide the postdoc with a sense of transparency about what it means to work as a colleague in their specialist environment. Second, these guidelines also seek to increase postdocs' focus on their career prospects as well as their qualification and training as academics. These guidelines seek to help increase the degree of transparency for postdocs considering potential career paths inside and outside academia.

These discussion guidelines provide an overview of topics relevant to strategic careers planning as well as a framework for discussion. It is not necessary for every discussion to touch upon every proposed topic. The postdoc should identify relevant topics in advance which he or she would like to discuss and inform his or her dialogue partner about them. These career consultations for the postdoc phase take place on a voluntary basis. The content of the discussions is confidential. In principle, it is recommended that these career consultations for the postdoc phase take place once a year.

¹ www.uni-osnabrueck.de/en/research/development-of-young-scholars/



Work

Projects and Tasks

- What priorities are there with respect to the tasks and projects set out in the job description?
- What milestones or other timescale objectives need to be considered?
- Who is the contact person for questions related to fields of work and work duties?



Teaching

- Is teaching to constitute part of any duties? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- If yes, how many contact hours are envisaged?
(e.g. as determined by a contract of employment)
- What kind of teaching is envisaged?
(e.g. lectures, seminars, supervising bachelor and master theses)
- What is the procedure for planning course topics and does the possibility exist for the postdoc to offer their own topics?
- Who is the contact person for questions related to course planning?



Principles of Good Academic Practice

In order to ensure adherence to the principles of good academic practice in accordance with the standards of the DFG² (German Research Association) and the »Directive to ensure good scientific practice at Osnabrück University«³, the parties involved have reached the following agreements and understandings regarding authorship, citation and the handling of research data (use, storage and access):



At Osnabrück University, PhD/Postdoc Career Center (ZePrOs) provides regular workshops for doctoral candidates and postdocs on good scientific practice and a symposium is held every two years on this subject.

² www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/principles_dfg_funding/good_scientific_practice/index.html

³ www.uni-osnabrueck.de/forschung/gute-wissenschaftliche-praxis/



Procedures Specific to Individual Institutes and Schools

Ensuring transparency with respect to specific procedures in each school, institute or research group makes it easier to establish a good working atmosphere from the outset. The following questions might help to establish transparency in this context:

- What agreements are in place regarding attendance in the research group, at the institute or in the school?
- How regularly and at what times do work-related meetings take place?

- To what degree is it possible/envisaged that the postdoc participates in committee work?



- Are there any other specific procedures and agreements in the research group, institute or school?

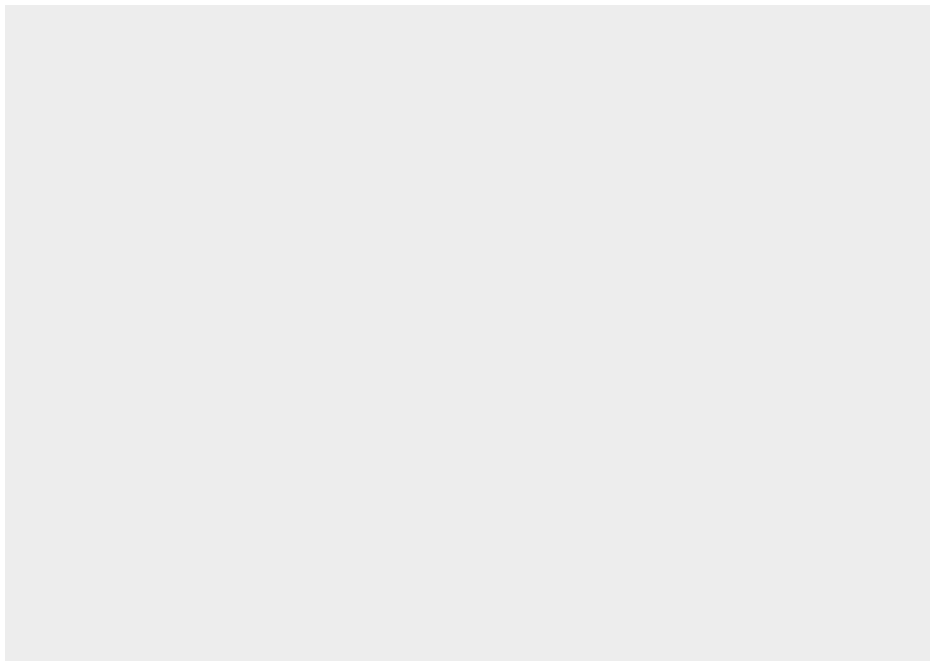
- Who are the relevant contact persons?



Dealing with Conflicts

Should any disagreements, misunderstandings or conflicts arise, the parties involved should as a basic principle try to resolve the issue by engaging in dialogue in a mutually respectful way.

- We have discussed the following agreements for dealing with conflicts:



Issues relating to good scientific practice should be addressed to Osnabrück University's Ombudsperson for good scientific practice and academic conflict resolution.⁴



ZePrOs also offers an individual consultation service for postdocs which includes support in conflict situations.⁵

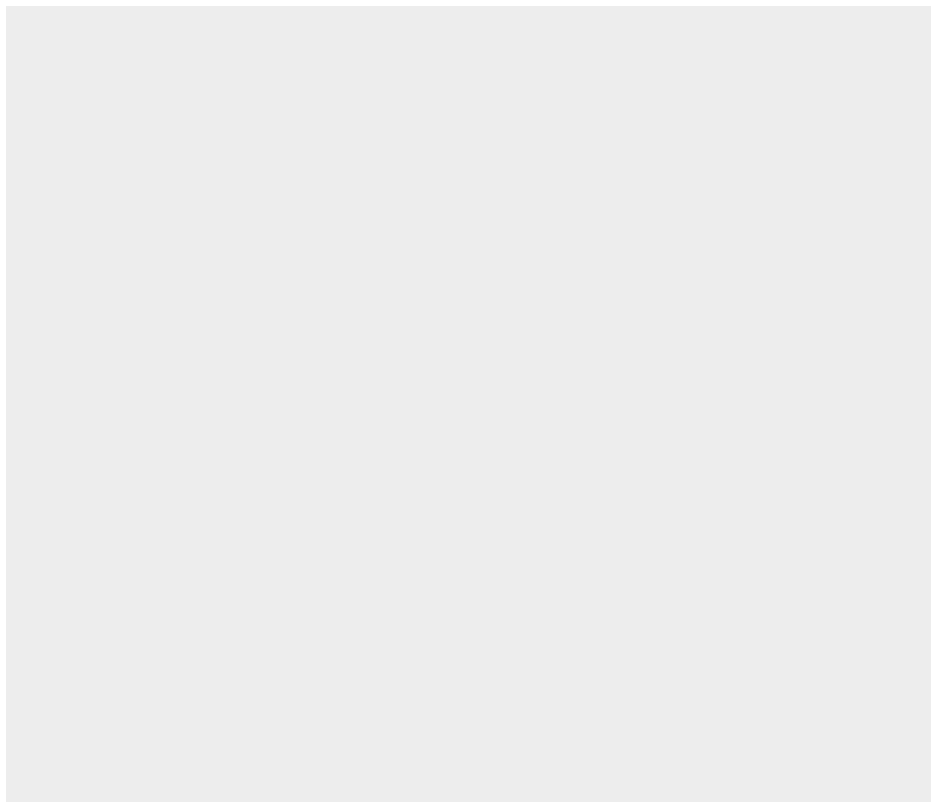
⁴ www.uni-osnabrueck.de/en/research/service/

⁵ www.uni-osnabrueck.de/en/research/development_of_young_scholars/phdpost_doc_career_center/our_services.html



Networking and Support for Postdocs

- What networking and support is available for postdocs within the institute or school?



ZePrOs offers support and networking opportunities for postdocs and provides further information on these topics. The postdoc representatives of the Scientific Advisory Council of ZePrOs also organize regular meetings with postdocs.⁶

⁶ www.uni-osnabrueck.de/en/research/development_of_young_scholars/phdpost_doc_career_center/networking_activities.html



Organization

It might be helpful to discuss the following points with respect to other organizational or financial issues:

- What are the procedures for applying to go on and claim expenses for research trips in the school/institute/research group?
- Is there a set annual budget for postdocs which they can use independently to plan the financing of their materials and travel expenses?

- What are the rules covering access to offices, laboratories, seminar rooms etc?



- What hardware and/or software does the postdoc need at his or her place of work and what is the procedure for acquiring it (insofar as this has not yet happened)?

- What is the procedure for applying for an email account (insofar as this has not yet happened)?

- Are there any other organizational issues that need to be clarified?



- Who are the contact persons for the above areas?



Information and advice about how to access further sources of finance (e.g. overseas travel and conference organization) is provided by Osnabrück University's research consultants.⁷

In order to ensure that there is enough time during the period of employment for the postdoc to pursue their own academic qualification, the following has been agreed:



Time planning should factor in any family responsibilities (children, caring for relatives) and personal constraints.⁸

⁷ www.uni-osnabrueck.de/en/research/development_of_young_scholars/phdpost_doc_career_center/our_services.html

⁸ The services provided by the Equal Opportunity Office for young academics with families are listed here: www.uni-osnabrueck.de/en/university/organisation/zentrale-verwaltung/the-equal-opportunity-office/#c121259



Academic Qualification and Training in the Postdoc Phase

The following sections serve to help postdocs to position themselves optimally regarding their academic qualification and training and to focus on the goals they have for their own development.

This includes prioritising how they wish to enhance their academic profile and achieve the targets they have set themselves for their academic development. It is helpful for the consultation if the postdoc compiles a list ahead of the meeting consisting of their previous achievements and successes in the areas they have chosen to discuss with an eye to identifying their targets and formulating clear steps which they might take next. The questions set out in each section serve to clarify the status quo and the postdoc's aims.



If the parties have not yet agreed to meet regularly to discuss the postdoc's academic qualification and career development, it is recommended that the frequency of career consultations be agreed upon as required. The meetings should, however, take place at least once a year.

Academic Qualification Profile:

- ☐ Research Profile (P. 16)
- ☐ Publications (P. 18)
- ☐ Habilitation (P. 20)
- ☐ External Funding (P. 21)
- ☐ Teaching/Supervision (P. 23)
- ☐ Presentations (P. 25)
- ☐ Networks and Partnerships (P. 27)
- ☐ Prizes and Awards (P. 28)
- ☐ Leadership (P. 29)
- ☐ Science Management (P. 30)
- ☐ Academic Self-Governance (P. 31)



■ How would you describe your current research profile?

Prior achievements:

Research Profile



You can describe your research profile by referencing the following points:

- The thematic focus of your research and the research problems that you are working on in the postdoc phase
- The methods you are using
- The disciplinary and interdisciplinary projects that you are working on



- What goals are you pursuing with respect to enhancing your research profile?
- When do you want to achieve these goals and what steps are you taking to achieve them?

Goals and steps to achieving them:



Publications

- ☒ What articles have you published so far?

(date, title, journal/periodical/anthology etc.)

- ☐ Attached as a separate appendix

Previous publications:



- What articles are in preparation?
(e.g. in the writing, coordination or review process)
- How relevant are the journals for your field of research?

Articles in preparation:

- What articles are you planning in the coming twelve months?
- What journals have you selected for their publication?
- What are the networks that are important for your publication strategy?

Goals and steps to achieving them:



Habilitation⁹

- If you are writing a habilitation (second book or cumulative habilitation), what subject have you chosen?
- What is the current status of your work?

Progress so far:

- What plans do you have for the coming twelve months with respect to your habilitation?

Goals and steps to achieving them:

⁹ Osnabrück University's habilitation regulations can be found here:
www.uni-osnabrueck.de/universitaet/organisation/ordnungen/uebersicht.html



External Funding

What external funding have you raised so far?

- ☒ Type (e.g. scholarships, material resources, personnel resources)
- ☒ Amount and duration of funding
- ☐ Attached as a separate appendix

Funding raised so far:

- ☒ What applications for external funding have you participated in to date?
- ☐ Attached as a separate appendix

Applications so far:



- What applications for external funding are you planning in the coming twelve months?
- What funding institutions do you intend to approach?
- What network partners have a role to play in this process?
- What are your next steps?

Goals and next steps:



The President's Cabinet of Osnabrück University has set up a central research pool to support the promotion of research-related third-party funding acquisitions. The university's research consultants also offer academics support and assistance in selecting a suitable source of funding for their projects and provide help completing applications and constructing research projects.



Teaching/Supervision

What courses have you already taught?

- Type (e.g. seminars, lectures)
- Topics
- Level of study
- ☐ Attached as a separate appendix

Courses taught so far:

- How many bachelor and/or master theses are you supervising?
- How many contact hours do you teach and can you reconcile your teaching and supervising duties with your research in terms of time management?
- Are you satisfied with your course evaluations?
- What courses have you taken in university-level teaching methodology?

Progress so far:



- What additional topics might be covered in the future?
- What steps are necessary to reach this aim?
- What would you like to change in the coming year in respect of your teaching and supervisory work? What would you like to work on in the coming year?

Goals and next steps:



Osnabrück University offers a program entitled »training in higher education didactics« (Zertifikatsprogramm »Hochschuldidaktische Qualifizierung«)¹⁰ which is open to all teaching members of the university and which results in a certificate being awarded to participants. Supplementing this, the university also offers the so-called Teaching Analysis Poll (TAP)¹¹, which is usually conducted in the middle of the semester. It asks participating students to identify aspects of their courses which support and hinder learning and to suggest improvements.

¹⁰ www.uni-osnabrueck.de/weiterbildung/hochschuldidaktik.html

¹¹ www.virtuos.uni-osnabrueck.de/hochschuldidaktik/teaching_analysis_poll.html



Presentations

- What events or conferences have you presented your research findings at so far?
- What has your contribution been (e.g. lecture or posters) at these events?
- ☐ Attached as a separate appendix

Presentations so far:



- What conferences do you want to attend in the coming twelve months in order to present your research findings?

Intended conference attendance and next steps:

- How do you intend to secure the necessary funding?



Networks and Partnerships

- What international experience have you acquired so far?
- In which (international) networks, specialist societies or research groups do you play an active role?
- What other (international) contacts do you cooperate with?
(e.g. research projects and institutes, mentors, companies, extramural organizations, associations)?

Existing contacts:

- What other scientists and scholars or institutions play an important role as cooperation or dialogue partners for your field?
- To what extent do you plan to expand your (international) partnerships and networks in the coming year?

Goals and next steps:



ZePrOs offers mentoring programs for young academics¹². Upon request, ZePrOs can also arrange for individual mentoring sessions which young academics can profit from and which are not integrated into an official mentoring program.

12 www.uni-osnabrueck.de/en/research/development_of_young_scholars/mentoring.html



Prizes and Awards

- What prizes and awards have you received so far?
- What scholarships have you been awarded so far?

Prizes, awards and scholarships so far:

- What prizes/awards/scholarships would you like to apply for and/or be nominated for?
- What steps do you need to take to bring this about and what deadlines do you need to take into account?

Goals and next steps:



Leadership

- In what projects and under what circumstances have you accumulated leadership experience so far?
- What leadership programs have you participated in?

Experience so far:

- How do you plan to develop your leadership skills and experience in the coming year? (e.g. by taking on more responsible roles, participating in staff development programs)?

Goals and next steps:



The mentoring program and seminars offered by ZePrOs¹³ include support for young academics seeking to enhance their leadership skills. In addition, the inter-university training program (Hochschulübergreifende Weiterbildung [HÜW])¹⁴ also offers seminars on leadership and change skills.

¹³ www.uni-osnabrueck.de/en/research/development_of_young_scholars/phdpost_doc_career_center.html

¹⁴ www.uni-osnabrueck.de/weiterbildung/hochschuluebergreifende_weiterbildung.html



Science Management

- What experience have you accumulated so far in science management?
(e.g. project management, conference planning, laboratory management, academic communication and/or training program in these areas)

Previous experience:

- What activities are you planning in the coming twelve months in the field of science management?
(e.g. assuming responsibilities, training programs)

Goals and next steps:



ZePrOs offers seminars on project management, leadership skills, academic communication etc. In addition, Osnabrück University's research consultants offer support to young academics in their planning, organization and financing of conferences.¹⁵

¹⁵ www.uni-osnabrueck.de/en/research/service/



Academic Self-Governance

- What experience do you have of academic self-governance so far?
(e.g. decentralized equal opportunity officer, non-professorial staff representative)

Experience so far:

- What fields of activity or committees would you like to participate in the future?

Goals and next steps:



By becoming involved in academic self-governance, you can gather useful experience in university politics and for your own future career. It also helps you to network across the university.



Career Prospects

The following questions are there to help you discuss potential career paths and prospects both inside and outside academia, and to identify the support you need to fulfil your plans.

Becoming a Professor



ZePrOs provides you with support for your career planning both **inside and outside academia** by offering individual career consultation, seminars and other events covering the following fields of expertise:

- Science and methods
- Leadership skills
- Self-management skills and career planning
- Work techniques, languages and media skills



ZePrOs also offers help with professional transition periods **inside and outside academia** within its program entitled »career direct«¹⁶.

What are the most important performance criteria which qualify you for a professorship in your field?

¹⁶ www.uni-osnabrueck.de/en/research/development_of_young_scholars/phdpost_doc_career_center/our_services.html



What skills and competences are particularly important for a professor in your field?



What are the most difficult challenges in your current qualification phase and/or with a view to you becoming a professor?

(e.g. to what extent is it possible to reconcile your research with your teaching duties and/or with your responsibilities in your institute or school? To what extent can you reconcile your private life and/or family duties with your qualification phase? Do your duties and responsibilities conflict with each other? How competitive is your field?)



Individual Consultations:

- ZePrOs offers information and individual advice on possible approaches to the qualification phase and career planning in the postdoc phase.
- The research consultants offer advice on the subject of »Academic Careers and External Funding« as well as how to finance and support research.
- The equal opportunity office offers advice on academic careers with a particular focus on gender and diversity.¹⁷

¹⁷ For more support offered by the Equal Opportunity Office, please see:
www.uni-osnabrueck.de/en/university/the-equal-opportunity-office/



What support will you need in the coming year?

(e.g. support with expanding your professional network, advice on publication strategies and planning conference papers, support with planning and obtaining external funding, taking professional development initiatives (e.g. those offered by ZePrOs¹⁸), support with reconciling professional and private/family duties)

Other Professional Fields

What other professional fields would (also) be of interest to you?

¹⁸ www.uni-osnabrueck.de/en/research/development_of_young_scholars/phdpost_doc_career_center.html



Have there been any changes in your professional goals?

What conditions must be fulfilled for you to attain this professional goal/these professional goals?

Who might be the best person to consult for more information on these professions?



What experience and skills relevant to these professional fields will you acquire during your academic career? What additional tasks and roles might you be given that would enhance these skills and this experience?

What support will you need in the coming year?

(e.g. will you need support expanding and servicing networks, reconciling work and family/private life? What professional development initiatives are you planning for the coming year?)



ZePrOs offers careers advice on topics related to (changing) professional focus, organizing contacts with companies and extramural organizations for the purpose of looking into a profession.¹⁹

¹⁹ www.uni-osnabrueck.de/en/research/development_of_young_scholars/phdpost_doc_career_center/our_services.html



Additional Questions

What additional points would you like to discuss?

(e.g. do you need help with clarifying contractual arrangements, work activities and/or the planning of your annual discussion?)

The guidelines for your annual review discussion in your postdoc phase are based on the career portfolio structure according to Müller (2014)²⁰ and Wilde (2016)²¹.

²⁰ Müller, Miriam (2014): Promotion – Postdoc – Professur. Karriereplanung in the Wissenschaft. Campus. Frankfurt, New York.

²¹ Wilde, Anne (2016): Auf dem Weg zur Professur. Die Postdoc-Fibel. academics GmbH, Hamburg.



Recommended Reading (in German):

- Färber, Christine und Riedler, Ute (2016): Black Box Berufung. Strategien auf dem Weg zur Professur. 2. Aktualisierte Auflage, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York.
- Müller, Mirjam (2017): Karrierewege nach der Wissenschaft. Alternative Berufswege für Promovierte. Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York.
- Müller, Mirjam (2014): Promotion, Postdoc, Professur. Karriereplanung in der Wissenschaft. Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York.
- Wilde, Anke (2016): Auf dem Weg zur Professur. Die Postdoc-Fibel 2016. academics GmbH, Hamburg.



Interesting Links:

- German Research Foundation: www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/research_careers/completion_of_doctorates/index.html
- Bundesbericht Wissenschaftlicher Nachwuchs 2017 [Federal Report on Young Scholars 2017]: www.buwin.de
- KISSWIN Exchange and Information Platform for Young Scholars: www.kisswin.de
- German Association of University Professors and Lecturers (Deutscher Hochschulverband, in short DHV): www.hochschulverband.de/cms1/wissnawachwuchs0.html
- »Research in Germany« portal: www.research-in-germany.org/en.html

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