

# EURAXESS TOPIV

Open EURAXESS – To strengthen the effectiveness and optimize the services of all partners in an innovative and open EURAXESS network

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10/09/2020	Version 1. First draft of the report was prepared, by using the results of the concept and results analyses of TNA, Survey and of the feedback of the working group.
21/10/2020	Version 2. The second draft included comments the team on the Toolkit from.
30/10/2020	Version 3. The document completed with the final Toolkit upload on Euraxess Portal.
30/11/2020	Version 4. Recommendations from the participants at the Workshop in November 2020.

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# Table of contents

Executive Summary

Introduction

Access to Self-Service E-Tool (ASSET)

# Executive Summary

Professional development for researchers is on the political agenda in many universities, funding bodies and governments. In the light of the great investments in researcher education and training across Europe, the researchers' career development aims to enhance the research intensity of countries' economies.

## Introduction

The ASSET Tool has been developed for EURAXESS support staff and member organisations under TOPIV to assist the establishment of more EURAXESS Career Development Centres (CDCs) and greater participation of European Research Area (ERA) researchers engaging in self-directed career development and planning. ASSET is a resource that provides tools and procedures to plan and begin CDC activities, guide researchers through self-assessment and career/development planning, and prepare researchers for career exploration, CV and interview training.

### ASSET

The ASSET Tool addresses cross-network needs outlined in a training needs analysis (TNA) 2.1 Task report conducted and written by the Irish Universities Association (IUA) in 2019, taking into account recommendations from other relevant EURAXESS projects and the ongoing WP5 capacity building of the EURAXESS Network. The development of the ASSET Tool included consultation with stakeholders, presented project findings, and identified best practices.

The value of the tool lies in the ability of individual EURAXESS members to use a combination of the available resources in a way that is tailored to suit their local/national context. Emphasis is placed on accessible e-learning that is self-directed. These tools were chosen because they produce results, save time and resources, and support further development of policy recommendations.

#### The ASSET Tool includes:

- 1) Setting up a Career Development Centre
- 2) Self-Assessment, career orientation and Career Supports tools
- 3) Job Application and interview techniques

#### The ASSET Tool:

The development of the Tool included 3 phases:

Phase 1: Preparation of detailed structure of the Tool, within the following framework:

1. Introduction to Euraxess ASSET Tool: content and objectives
2. Topics of the ASSET Tool
  - a. Setting up a Career Development Centre
  - b. External Career Supports&Researcher Career Paths or Options
  - c. Job Search & Application, interview techniques
3. Terms of use, Contact details, Acknowledgements

Phase 2: Content development and script writing, including detailed descriptions, workshop templates and models, based on the course structure of the topics listed in point 2 and the Euraxess Training Materials available via the project's WP5.

Phase 3: Technical implementation of the ASSET Tool, audio, video, visuals, storyboard of the slides on screen with 3 sections: learning objectives, transcript and resources. The final product steamed via the British Council Vimeo account is part of the Euraxess tools sections and has been integrated within the TOPIII Researcher Development Toolkit, being reviewed and amended.

The British Council subcontracted an external provider to support work on the task, with a special focus on the content, framework / easy to use model resources. The British Council participated in the development, amendment, and carried out a quality review of the existing materials and resources to be included in the ASSET Tool.

The Toolkit was developed in Vimeo and was transferred to the Euraxess website. The Vimeo stream was selected for the following reasons:

- 1) Vimeo streams video content very well. Their servers send the correct bitrate video to the correct device (PC, laptop, tablet, phone etc.).
- 2) CDN: Content Delivery Network: Vimeo has servers all over the world so they can automatically stream much quicker to any location than we can from a single server.
- 3) Customisation: The Vimeo interface can be easily customised.
- 4) There is no third party advertising involved.
- 5) The end screen can be customised so that when your video finishes you can decide what video will follow next. This can allow you to guide the viewer on to another specific video.
- 6) Captions can be enabled for videos at any time when in full screen.
- 7) Privacy: Video can be prevented from being downloaded and hidden from Vimeo (so it only shows on Euraxess site).
- 8) The video can be accessed across all platforms and devices.
- 9) Users can use the streaming service for all videos across websites.

### **The Process**

The development of the ASSET Tool was based on the survey and follow up recommendations from Euraxess network workshops (Borovets Network wide training 2019), the TNA survey conducted as part of Task 2.1, desk research of policy recommendations of researchers' associations, and was built upon previous Euraxess projects. This ensured maximum cross-over to support complementarity of effort. The overall planned output was over-exceeded, the online product includes 30 resources, 40 min audio of which 25 min video. The functionalities of the ASSET Tool allow flexibility in terms of equality and diversity as the materials are voice-over and transcript, time constraints and level of expertise as users can move at their own pace, including an options that allows access to separate resources when and if needed.

Developing inclusive systems that enable gender equality is one of the topics in the Setting up career development centre section. The organisations need to assess and bring consistency to their provision to achieve gender equality. It is not a simple task; it requires a multi-tiered approach that can engender change at multiple levels and aspects. It is a journey and regular review; revision and innovation are required to address issued related to organisational culture, stereotypes and assumptions and professional development.

The challenge of updating the information has been also solved as there is an easy mechanism to add further materials or amend the ones in place as the network develops over time (links are embedded).

The content of the ASSET Tool has been very carefully studied and includes big volume of information of tools, resources and external documents and links, which have been structured to facilitate smooth navigation, quick access and clear sequence, additionally guided by video films with voice and subtitled text.

The ASSET Tool will be presented and tested at the November workshop and (to be reflected in the final version) to take more ideas for improvements. The feedback will be followed up and further amendments will be made.

The production process for the Tutorial included drafting a concept of story-boarding and script; identification and selection of visuals; and texts, templates and external links.

**Milestones:**

The external subcontractor provided the following Services and Deliverables to the British Council:

The Supplier was required to devise and develop the ASSET Tool, a web-based tutorial with voice-over targeted at future trainers of researchers under the EURAXESS network.

- Deliverable 1: Script content: key sections, main text and external documents
- Deliverable 2: Design and layout
- Deliverable 3: First stage of production of the Tool: voice over, storyboard and design
- Deliverable 4: Final production of the Tool

The production process included the following inputs, coordinated and agreed in writing with the British Council in advance:

- Concept of the overall structure, design and content of the tool;
- Draft of the script and texts of the resources
- Proposal and selection of visuals
- Texts, templates and logos

# EURAXESS ASSET

## (Access to Self-Service E-Tool)

EURAXESS

JOBS & FUNDING CAREER DEVELOPMENT PARTNERING INFORMATION & ASSISTANCE NATIONAL PORTALS EURAXESS WORLDWIDE MY EURAXESS EXTRANET

( BACK TO INTRODUCTION )

### Researcher Career Development Toolkit

Training module for EURAXESS staff in Researcher Career Development with links to the relevant resources where applicable.

INTRODUCTION
Career options
Access self-service e-tool (ASSET)
1) Introduction to ASSET
2) Setting up a career development centre
(2a) Training Resources Bank
(2b) Models for Events & Activities
3) Self assessment, career orientation and career support tools

### INTRODUCTION TO ACCESS SELF-SERVICE E-TOOL (ASSET)

The ASSET Tool includes:

1. Setting up a Career Development Centre
2. Self-Assessment, Career Orientation and Career Supports Tools
3. Job Application and Interview Techniques

HOW TO USE TRANSCRIPT

## Script

### Introduction / Objectives of the ASSET Tool

Career planning, development and management have become increasingly important for researchers and their potential employers. To achieve the ambitious goals outlined by the European Commission regarding research and innovation, assisting the professional development of researchers has been identified as a topic of high priority for the future of the European economy, healthcare, food supplies and the welfare of the planet. Early stage researchers in Europe need professional advice and assistance when making career decisions. This is now widely agreed to be best practice right across the European Research Area (ERA) and EURAXESS strives to make researchers' career development as widely and inclusively available as possible.

Providing meaningful career and development supports to researchers places your institution on a level playing field with other organisations looking to attract research talent.

# Setting up Researchers' Career Development Centres

## Learning outcome

ASSET will enable participants to navigate a practical road map for setting up a CDC. Beginning with the basic practicalities, it will guide them through the development of strategy and analysis to identify issues and brainstorm ideas to overcome challenges.

It is designed to provide the participants with insights, understanding, tools and best practice examples of setting up a CDC and the key elements it involves - building a detailed plan with suggested timelines, roles, commitment and support from stakeholders. This will assist in identifying key audiences and setting the short term and long-term desired outcomes.

Providing meaningful career and development supports to researchers places your institution on a level playing field with other organisations looking to attract research talent.

EURAXESS Career Development Centres (CDC's) exist in many shapes and sizes. Some have been set up as well-resourced offices with a handful of staff while others have been set up by one person with just a desk and computer. CDC's have been set up with little or no funding while others have begun with a business plan and even a bank loan! Later we will show you the three levels of EURAXESS services but whatever type of CDC you set up the EURAXESS Network will be available to provide you with experienced advice and collegiality, in addition to online tools and supports to get you operational as soon as possible.

1. Why Career Development Centres are needed.
2. Starting up your CDC.
3. Your services, audiences and stakeholders.
4. Development of strategy to set up your CDC.
5. Scaling up your services and competencies.
6. Recommendations for awareness activities.
7. Your key service, working with researchers.
8. Mainstreaming gender at CDCs.
9. Support from the Network, EURAXESS online tools and resources.

## **1. So why are CDC's needed and how can you help us?**

There are many reasons and examples. These include:

EURAXESS Career Development Centres serve the needs of researchers (and other stakeholders) to plan their development and to support researchers in finding their appropriate career path. This is intended to keep more post docs in research and other related fields, utilising their competencies and considerable education.

To co-ordinate the career development and networking activities of all CDC stakeholders and to assist PhDs to navigate their postdoctoral career path with a view to helping each researcher to maximise their potential.

We want to have a one-stop location where researchers can access all career and professional development supports and information.

The CDC may also be a collaborative tool between your institution and surrounding society/industry. Local business and industry can benefit from working with your researchers, stimulating innovation. Regular targeted outreach activities inform all possible

stakeholders of the benefits of research projects while possibly influencing the next generation of scientists.

Assist your institution to advocate, to attract, engage and retain female/parent researchers and to handle legal/mobility issues with non-EU researchers.

Remove any obstacles unique to female researchers that inhibit their access to CDC services or their involvement in Career Development activities and opportunities.

## **2. STARTING UP**

Generally, we refer to all EURAXESS Development Centres as CDCs but, to be precise, there are three levels of the EURAXESS service model. This is to promote steady, progressive development of each centre's service offerings. The development plan for your CDC can be incremental, adding services, step by step, over time as resources become available.

When it comes to funding, Digital or Virtual CDCs (Level 1), offering only online services, require little or no funding. However, the establishment of a physical centre with personal services is dependent on some funding. Some regions have limited resources that do not allow them to deliver advanced career development support and some advanced services, such as coaching, can be expensive.

Lack of initial support from your institution may be a problem. Many academic institutions are reluctant to fund career services, and particularly those career services that support career development beyond academia. Of course, in most cases this can be attributed to real budgetary constraints.

The early steps explained in the ASSET tool will allow you to begin Career Development activities, develop your CDC and work with your BHO (Bridgehead Organisation) on further development. BHOs act as co-ordinators of the Network at a national level and liaise with the EC, national governments and other organisations with you and on your behalf.

You can register as a CDC on the EURAXESS website. In the Tools & Resources section below you will find a link to a video guide to registering. The website contains information on training resources, interacting with industry, thousands of vacancies and fellowships from more than 40 European countries and other regions around the world.

There is also information on funding, collaboration and organisations looking for specific skill sets and partners. All of the different national portals and EURAXESS support centres can be found on the website. Of course, the website also contains the EURAXESS Network's extranet which is the main method of internal communications.

The extranet hosts all membership profiles and EURAXESS news. There you will also find an events calendar, library of resources, tools and research reports.

As mentioned earlier, the three designated 'levels', based on the range of services offered, of the EURAXESS career development service model represent status as either a:

- Career Development Platform (CDP, Level 1, providing an e-platform, awareness activities, links to existing tools & resources).
- Career Development Service (CDS, Level 2, also providing researcher case studies/testimonials, gap and training needs analysis) and,
- Career Development Centre (CDC, Level 3, providing career coaching and guidance).

Current available EURAXESS online tools, when utilised, will raise all new CDC's automatically to Level 2, Career Development Service.

### 3. Your Services, Audiences & Stakeholders

#### Preparation/Planning

##### Determining the Target Stakeholders & Audiences' Motivations Exercise: What we can do and what we need from each other?

Your planning will depend a great deal on two considerations, the services you wish to offer to your researchers and the different stakeholders/audiences that you will need for engagement, support and collaboration. These next two sections will inform your planning exercise. The first exercise is to determine the different motivations and needs of your various stakeholders and audiences. Follow the guidance detailed under the Resources tab below this video:

#### What services do we need to offer?

In addition to providing you with ongoing training to increase your capabilities, the EURAXESS Network exists to support you to develop researchers' careers and mobility. We understand that most CDC's begin with small steps and very limited resources. The Network will depend on your active involvement and feedback to further improve the supports that we can offer. From the very beginning, of course, your key service will be working directly with researchers to plan their development and career paths. As you scale up your services and resources over time you will eventually attain the level of a full service Career Development Centre (Level 3). The services will include:

Workshops/Training events/Webinars	Networking training & events	Enable EU policy to be implemented – Putting policy into practice
E-platform with useful information	Peer-to-peer exchange of good practices	Industry secondments.
Learning resources	Support and advice from centres of excellence	Introducing industry and society to the benefits of working with researchers.
Self-assessment tools	Access to an extensive network of employers & employees	Offer all other available career development-related experiences
Raise researcher awareness of the importance of skills development	Initiating & advocating for new EU policies (ie policy recommendations & associated materials)	EURAXESS support staff training events and seminars
Encourage industry involvement/input in workshops and resource development		

#### Research what existing EURAXESS online tools & resources can fill a need for CDC activity.

In the "Tools & Resources" tab (below this video) you will find a list of relevant EURAXESS Good Practices, links to Online Tools and other related links.

#### Identify your audience and stakeholders: Who do we want to influence and collaborate with?

As already mentioned, the CDC will have different audiences and stakeholders that you will need for engagement, support and collaboration. These groups will also be the focus of your different awareness activities.

They include:

- Students
- Graduates
- PhD students
- Post docs
- Early career researchers
- Researchers
- Research spouses/partners
- Research staff
- Academic staff
- Supervisors
- Professors
- Human Resources
- Potential research employers in all sectors
- Your own institution
- Other CDC's
- Other Higher Education institutions
- The EURAXESS network
- Local & national government
- Policy makers
- Your financial institution

This information will assist you to complete your Motivations and Opportunity canvas exercises discussed next.

#### **4. Development of a strategy to set up your CDC: Opportunity canvas exercise (a template and example is available in the Tools & Resources section)**

The Opportunity Canvas exercise provides an easy-to-use [template](#) that allows you to itemise and sequence all necessary activities as itemised below:

- Strategy. Discuss the current situation, identify issues and suggest an action plan with short, medium- and long-term goals.
- What resources will you need to address all aspects of Researcher Career Development? (Material, time, ideas, communication, partners, etc.)
- List all audience and stakeholders who will benefit from CDC services and their needs
- Describe what you wish to achieve and what activities you wish to bring to your stakeholders (we discussed Services earlier)
- Think about the practical needs for your planned activities, communications, and relationships.
- Initial primary discussions with your institution should be taken with all relevant bodies, offices and stakeholders. Get as much political buy-in as possible.
- Utilise internal resources fully: Develop closer links with HR & all faculty research departments, colleagues from different disciplines, doctoral schools, technology transfer office & incubators.
- What is the internal context of the institution? How can the CDC fit into the overall institutional strategy?
- Include the key actions required for successful implementation of your plan.
- Identify the key external partners needed for your activities and what actions are supported by them.
- What is the external environment? (economic, local/regional industry)
- Promote mutual benefits. Always consider the needs of your potential partners/collaborators.

- If you intend to develop a close working relationship with industry it might be a good idea to develop a business plan.

### **5. Scaling up your services and competencies.**

Here are some of the activities that your CDC can engage in:

- Organising and taking part in “Train-the-Trainer” events through the Network to encourage development of support staff competencies and knowledge.
- Become familiar with all EURAXESS self-training guides and resources. Acquire skills in delivering training as this makes your training programmes more effective.
- Deliver training on an ongoing and regular basis. This maintains high visibility for the CDC.
- Provide adequate and well-rounded career-related advice to all researchers.
- Assemble information on available tools and resources so that your researchers have the best available support.
- Provide Dual Career information & supports. For many researchers this issue is a mobility inhibitor.
- The CDC should seek to influence the agenda and co-ordinate support for researchers’ career development. Work in co-operation with others at our institutions and be aware of what we expect from them.
- Develop and maintain a knowledge bank of mobile researchers. Local government may then decide on how to use them as experts or as advisers for information-based and independent decisions. Identify areas of key priorities for local government and work on joint programmes.
- Improve communications with your institutions’ decision makers, establishing an important and valued role for the CDC as a thought leader and influencer in how your institution approaches career development issues.
- Update your knowledge and understanding of industry drivers. This allows you to better prepare your researchers for life beyond academia. The best way to do this is to meet and interact with industry actors on a regular basis.

Working with local government and industry can help to promote EURAXESS activities and, whenever possible, involve them in participating and organising special events for researchers. This will establish closer connections between your students/researchers and potential employers in society/business/industry or environmental sectors.

Promote information on how local business, industry and greater society can benefit from engaging with your researchers and the added value that they can offer. Attracting, engaging and retaining researchers to come and work in your region opens more opportunities through co-operative/responsive innovation and contributes to its future success.

### **Recommendations for Awareness Activities to support the development of your CDC**

The Euraxess CDC should aim to build and enhance EURAXESS’ reputation amongst all stakeholders. The CDC can decide on a reviewable strategy to be visible and discoverable to all target audiences/stakeholders.

Plan a strategy to:

- Build an online presence. The CDC should promote awareness of the existing Euraxess Career Development online tools (including information about funding and career opportunities).
- Provide easily accessible and up-to-date information on all EURAXESS Centre websites to fully educate researchers, academia and industry on the importance of researcher career development and the mission, role and supports provided by EURAXESS Career Development Services.
- Include EURAXESS Career development promotional material in a newsletter and on social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.)

- Engage regularly with all relevant academic and non-academic stakeholders. Identify and meet with key potential collaborators and build sustainable relationships based on mutual goals.
- Attend national / international trade shows and researcher career development events and the distribution of promotional materials at such events
- Have meaningful involvement in researcher career events held within the academic and non-academic institutions of the researchers that your CDC supports
- Invite researchers to talk about their personal career development journey during events organised by EURAXESS or making their individual stories available on the national EURAXESS portals.

## 6. Key Service, Working With Your Researchers

### Getting “buy-in” from researchers. How to maximise face-to-face researcher engagement at the CDC.

Have a one-to-one conversation on career development the day you meet incoming researchers. Have a positive conversation about their new experiences and their planned next career/development steps. It is important to plant this thought early with researchers and the understanding that their current location is not their final destination but a place that will provide them with support and opportunities to take their individual skill set to a destination that they will decide for themselves.

The first step is to provide researchers with realistic expectations regarding their careers, particularly regarding careers in academia. The majority of researchers who approach a CDC generally fall into one of three categories:

Those who know exactly which career path they wish to follow and are happy with their choice. They merely seek specific information on training / funding / employment opportunities etc. This is a small minority.

Those who believe that they know which career path they wish to follow but are unprepared in terms of information, details and training needs.

Those who are unsure what to do next, assuming the next step in their careers will follow naturally, or those who have not really given thought to the matter.

The first group usually just requires specific information or training to assist them on their path. The second and third groups, i.e., the majority of researchers, need to develop a career / development plan. The CDC should provide guidance to determine the development needs of the individual researchers.

### How to maximise and blend online and face-to-face researcher engagement.

EURAXESS can offer every researcher an online Personal Assessment that is both unique and private to them only and free to use. All that's required is an email address. The assessment results are very helpful, informative and indicative of the types of training and career choices that the researcher can pursue.

The researcher can use the results to develop their career/development plan and choose their goals.

At this point, ideally, the CDC could provide coaching/guidance to help the researcher to organise, detail and reality test their goals and plans. The researcher should now have the ability to make well informed decisions regarding their professional development and career options.

## 7. Mainstreaming gender at CDCs

CDCs can plan to deliver practical gender-related solutions that are easily accessed. The intention is to mainstream these policies in order to attract, engage and retain parent researchers. Seeking collaboration/co-operation with local authorities and other stakeholders who should be interested in spreading best practices will expand the number of options available to CDC users.

The following points can be used to explore ways of promoting and embedding gender equality and diversity in the CDCs practices and activities. Gender equality in practice offers equal rights and entitlements to all researchers. This means that each individual researcher's rights, responsibilities and opportunities are not dependent on their gender.

Equal opportunity policies should not depend on whether the role is a full-time or part-time position, or if an applicant is currently working in a part-time position. Other factors that must not be allowed to block opportunities are if an applicant is a primary care provider, primary earner, their age, stage of career, size of the institution, city, company or present remuneration / salary.

HR policies at industry / academic institutions are grouped into three elements: 1) Family and work-life balance; 2) Fulfilment at work, teamwork, open and transparent evaluation and recognition processes and, 3) Inclusive culture.

We have the following suggestions for each element:

1. Work-life balance / supporting children / families' policies:
  - a) Specific leave for parents and carers. It is important to take into consideration the number and age of children.
    - Adoption Leave
    - Maternity Leave
    - Paternity Leave
    - Parental Leave
    - Shared Parental Leave
    - Time Off to Care for Dependents
  - b) Contracts, expenses and vouchers
    - Childcare Vouchers - financial contribution to childcare (possible collaboration with the local municipality)
    - Travel expenses for childcare
    - Parents' contracts
  - c) Childcare arrangements
    - Work from home during school holidays, parents' meetings, flexibility to work from home, family day
2. Career Opportunities and Performance evaluation
  - Mentoring and coaching programme
  - Networking opportunities
  - Open, transparent process of quarter / mid-year and end of year performance reviews, recognition and feedback, regular one to one meetings, set of clear objectives and expectations
  - Equal opportunity for learning, training and development
  - Open communication about career paths

3. HR initiatives to create inclusive environment and culture:
  - Gender training that aims to provide a basic understanding of definitions, blockers and boosters.
  - Effective management of gender: Leadership, teamwork and effective communication training which aims to:
    - Realise that equality needn't mean 'the same'. Equality of opportunity means that you can do *different* things with that opportunity.
    - Recognise that in a good partnership, each partner gains from accepting the other's ideas and creativity.
    - Create a culture of taking ownership of decisions, empowering people to think things through and take initiative on their own.
    - When you promote a better understanding between people who seem quite different, whoever they are, you actually find that they're not so different after all.
    - Make it clear that when people always have others to represent them, they will never be empowered to represent themselves.

## 8. Quantifying Your Services

Utilise the EURAXESS CDC Training Needs Analysis (TNA). It is designed to allow all EURAXESS centres to evaluate the Career Development (CD) services that they offer using the specifically designed EURAXESS REFLEX app. In the Tools and resources section below this video you find the links to the REFLEX app tutorial video and the EURAXESS TNA.

The singular and common gaps identified in the TNAs across the entire network will inform the further development of materials and tools in the future and raise possibilities/opportunities for peer-to-peer co-operation and resource sharing/development.

## 9. Support from the Network, EURAXESS online tools & resources

As EURAXESS support staff you will also find plenty of information on organising training and other events in addition to networking your service centre in the EURAXESS Researchers' Online Career Development Training Toolkit.

- Whenever possible get involved and support the growth and development of your national network and awareness of EURAXESS CDC services.
- The EURAXESS network organises national and international training events in addition to conferences and seminars. Get involved whenever possible.
- You can also arrange "Career Days" and submit proposals for funding from a number of sources.

# Tools & Resources

## Quantifying Your Services

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# Job Application, Interview Techniques & Competencies

**Learning Objectives:** That EURAXESS support staff have a good understanding of CV structure and the purpose of all information included. The promotion of job application, CV writing and interview competencies to a high competitive standard across EURAXESS CDCs. CDC personnel should also be professionally familiar with job interview preparation, interview techniques, formats and types of questions.

**Desired Outcomes:** All CDC's can offer relevant information and training around the topics of Job Application, Interview Techniques & Competencies.

## CV and Job Interview Skills

CV and interview skills are essentially a collection of competencies that emphasis attention to detail and progressive, complimentary steps. The main purpose of your CV should be to secure a specific job interview for you.

## Your CV

While almost everybody will have an up to date CV available there is really no such thing as your "standard" CV. Every CV needs to be tailored specifically for the role/position that you are applying for, especially if you are applying for a role that is part of your career/development plan.

It is likely that your CV will be just one of many applying for a particular role. More job applications are eliminated at the CV early "sifting" stage than at any other. Large pharmaceutical and IT corporations, for example, receive numerous applications for most advertised roles. When sifting through the applications for the first time they would probably spend no more than 5 seconds on each "first look" at a CV. For this reason, you need to have the most important information about you and your role-matching skills in a prominent, visible position.

## The Role Description and Required Skills

The first thing to understand is what and who the employer is looking for. The actual job advertisement will usually provide an excellent role description or guideline. The skills/competencies and role profile contained in the job advertisement can be compared against the skills list you will have compiled during your own skills audit.

The first item on a CV is your relevant contact information. This usually consists of your name, address, telephone number, and email address. Immediately beneath this you will need to include a short personal profile. This is a very similar (but shortened) version of your "elevator pitch" that perhaps you are familiar with from networking training. It should be a short, concise paragraph outlining your personal & professional characteristics in addition to your goals/ambitions. Look to include key words that may have been in the role description. Your personal profile is an opportunity for you to define yourself to an organisation that you wish to work for.

The next information on your CV will be your skills. The first, and most prominent, skills that you list should be your skills that are the closest to matching the required skills listed in the role description. Of course, you will have read the role description and company information carefully before beginning to write your CV. So let's look at a sample job notice.

The Role: (descriptive words taken from sample job advert). What competencies, knowledge and experiences do you have that are applicable? Make sure you highlight these in your personal profile and your employment/education history.

**Required Skills:** Look at your own skills list and highlight those that match, or are close to, the competencies required for the role. Next list any related skills or experiences that you feel could add value to the role. If there is still adequate space you may list any other competencies that you feel have a relevance to the role, company or organisation.

**The Company/Organisation:** What words do the company use to describe themselves? What kind of working environment is it? What is the company ethos and history? How does this organisation intersect with your own plan or journey? This type of information should inform how you prepare for the job interview.

So, at this point we now have the top-half of the first page of your CV completed. As mentioned, this is the most important part of your CV when it comes to getting past the first, CV “sifting” stage. The next item on your CV is a chronological listing of your work history. This is only changed if your education history has more direct relevance to the role you are applying for. In such circumstances it would be preferable to list your education history first.

Under each job title in your employment history you should list your duties, responsibilities and achievements. You also need to list the dates you started and finished each role. Ensure that your dates are correct and sequential.

When listing your work history, be sure to highlight any competencies, roles or experiences that compliment or add value to the role you are applying for. It is a good idea to also highlight any aspects of your CV that coincides with the stated ethos, values and direction of the organisation you are applying to.

After your work history you will list your education history and qualifications with special emphasis on any qualifications that relate or add value to the role you are wish to apply for.

Once you have completed your professional and educational history you may then list your interests and hobbies. It is best to be honest when listing your interests as they are indicative of your passions and some of the topics may come up for discussion during the job interview.

Lastly, your references. It is no longer best practice to list your references on your CV. This is because we don't want to be sending others' personal contact information via email as your CV may be passed around without your permission. There may also be GDPR considerations.

On your CV you may merely write “References (or) Excellent References available upon request”. Usually a prospective employer will request your reference contact details after a successful interview. This allows you to contact your nominated referees to notify them that they will probably be contacted in the coming days. They may ask you questions about the role and organisation. This approach ensures that your referees are not being contacted unnecessarily, wasting their time.

Whenever possible please try to limit your (non-academic) CV to 2 pages, 3 at the most. The CV should be clearly laid out and easy to read with adequate white spaces. Use professional fonts and styles consistently and all fonts should be the same size (11 or 12) except when listing your name and headings. All headings should be in bold and/or italics.

All bullet points and paragraphs need to be consistent, plain and aligned. Your CV must be accurate in content, spelling and grammar, informative but concise. This means that you need to proof-read your CV and ensure that it is no longer than necessary. Can individual sentences or paragraphs be shortened while providing the same amount of information?

Seven out of every ten CV's received by some high-profile organisations contain spelling errors. What would that say about your attention to detail and your motivations?

After you apply for a role you should be expecting a possible telephone call to invite you for an interview. Keep your phone turned on and, when you are busy, have a simple but professional voicemail. If a potential employer gets what you consider to be a “funny” voicemail message they may not get a good impression of you. How do you answer your phone when you don’t recognise the calling number?

What about your social media presence? Is there anything that could be slightly embarrassing or may look unprofessional? If an organisation is seriously considering employing you they may check your online presence while verifying your references.

## The Job Interview

For those of us who get anxious or nervous before or during job interviews it is important to remember that the reason that you have been invited to meet with the employer is that, based on your CV and experience, the employer believes that your profile matches what is required and they want you to be the right candidate. They *want* to hire you. So when preparing for an interview you should realise that this is your opportunity to convince them that you are indeed the best candidate to fill their vacancy.

During an interview the employer will look for:

- Evidence of your skills/and competencies (Can you do the job?)
- Your interests and passions, your motivations (Will you do the job?)
- Your personality and values, if you match their ethos and culture (Will you fit it in?)

The better prepared that you are for the interview, the more confident you will feel and the easier it will be to answer the interview questions. You won’t always know what type of interview the employer will use so it is best to prepare for a few:

- **Traditional interview**
- **Competency-based interview**
- **Strengths-based interview**
- **Telephone interview** – Can be used for phone screening or preliminary interview
- **Whiteboard interview** – Some researchers have experienced this whereby they would be asked to solve problems, explain or discuss ideas using a whiteboard during an interview.

Sometimes, in preparation, you may contact the individual who invited you to do the interview and ask them:

How many people will be conducting the interview? Have their identities been decided? Will the interview have a specific format? These questions will help you to be more prepared and, hopefully, more relaxed and confident. Having this information may also provide you with a competitive advantage over other candidates.

In order to prepare for an interview, you should:

Know your CV completely and ensure that you can clarify any gaps; you will be asked about them. Research the company or organisation completely. What is their history? How/why did it begin? Do they have a unique culture/identity? What are their short, medium and long term goals and ambitions? How does the organisations plans fit with your own plan or journey? Think of how your personality and your interests fit. Think of how relevant your CV and experience is to the role and organisation. Prepare some related “talking points” for the interview that highlights your suitability for the role and organisation. While researching the organisation you should probably prepare some questions too, particularly about their processes and future plans.

Before the interview you should turn your phone off.

- **During the interview**
  - Non-verbal communication speaks louder than words. 55% of our message is communicated through our body language. It includes:

- Handshake; (Warm but not too firm. Best accompanied with a smile and steady eye contact)
- Facial Expression – Eye Contact – Establish rapport; always look at the person speaking or the person you are speaking to. Listen carefully to what they are saying/asking. It is the best way for the interview to become a conversation and this is a positive development. If you did not hear/understand a question be sure to ask the interviewer to repeat or elaborate on the question. Demonstrate your listening skills. Do not talk over the interviewer.
- Tone of voice; your tone should be friendly and professional. Be sure to articulate your answers correctly and avoid very short answers.
- Posture; and
- Gestures. Your body language and facial expressions. Sit straight, do not fold your arms. Be positive and when you are speaking about topics that interest or motivate you, let your enthusiasm show.
- Tell them about your journey. Your career plan and how working with/for them allows you opportunities to make a difference to a research area that you are passionate about, contributing to the organisations' success while expanding your own competencies and experiences.
- At the end of the interview you will almost certainly be asked if you have any questions. Perhaps you have some questions from your research of the company or role? Your first or second question should not be about topics such as salary or vacation time etc. If you are asked about your salary expectations you could inquire about the range of the salary scale before replying.

**Traditional interviews** follow the organisation of your CV and would also refer to the role description and how closely your CV matches it. The interviewer will use your CV as a guide to probe your preferences, past decisions and achievements as demonstrated through your professional, academic and other activities.

Most common questions asked during a traditional interview:

- How would you describe yourself? (Remember your Elevator Pitch?)
- Could you tell us about your present / last job? (Say only positive things about your last role and employer. Discuss the elements of the role that best relate to the role you are interviewing for)
- What do you know about our organisation? (This is an opportunity for you to show that you have done your research)
- Why would you like to work for (name of organisation)? Discuss what you understand to be the future direction of the organisation and how they fit in with your own goals and plans. Explain how you can contribute to this and what you hope to gain in return in terms of new experiences, (team or group) achievements, new competencies and career progression etc. Help them to understand that you see an alignment between your own personal goals and those of the organisation.
- Why do you think you might be a better fit than other applicants with similar experience and qualifications? (This is where you can discuss the positive elements of your personality that apply to this role and your values that match the stated ethos of the organisation).
- Why are you the best person for this role? (Your motivations and passions. This is where your Interests assessment will give you plenty to discuss).
- What is your main strength? (If any of your motivated skills match the required skills of the role discuss these first as your motivation will come through naturally)
- What is your main weakness? (Discuss a training workshop that you recently completed or are about to take. The theme of the training could be used as an example of how you identify your own areas for development & upskilling)

## Competency-based interview

In a Competency-based Interview the questions are designed to help candidates give evidence of the competencies that are needed to perform well in the role. Usually, you will be expected to give an example of how you have demonstrated these competencies in the past.

- Competencies that employers want or value:
  - Communication (The job interview itself is an excellent opportunity to display your communication skills)
  - Interpersonal;
  - Teamwork;
  - Problem solving;
  - Organisational;
  - Multi-tasking;
  - Flexibility;
  - Adaptability;
  - Positive attitude;
  - Initiative; and
  - IT related literacy

The best approach for candidates to take to a competency-based interview is to use the STAR technique. They want to know whether you've actually had the experiences that prove you can handle this new position. How have you dealt with certain circumstances in the past?

They also want to understand how you think. For instance, how you approach and solve problems, as well as how you apply certain required skills.

### STAR

- S** Situation Detail the background. Include the context. Where and when? (For example; "A few months ago we were working on ----- and (something unusual, unexpected or challenging happened)" Then be sure to explain that you understood the possible implications and negative outcomes if this issue was not addressed.
- T** Task Describe the challenge and expectations. What needed to be done? (Explain your thinking and rationale. What could you do and who could you enlist to help you deal with the issue?)
- A** Actions Your action. What did you do and how? (What was your decision and what did you do? Did you need to organise or brief others to help you or did you need to help others?)
- R** Results Explain the results and accomplishments. (Were the results immediate or clear? What was the reaction of your colleagues? Be sure to credit the contribution of others as it demonstrates a generosity that goes well with teamwork).

- The most common and frequently asked competency-based interview questions:
  - Could you tell us about the time when you used your communication skills effectively? (You could talk about presentations, your ability to communicate research findings, including conferences, seminars, written publications and convey scientific information to a variety of audiences, public engagement or outreach activities, team leading etc. You will have many examples)
  - Could you tell us about the time when you used your interpersonal skills? (Client skills. One to one relationship with colleagues, supporting or helping colleagues or peers, positive team working experiences, dealing with sensitive issues, etc.)
  - Can you provide us with an example of when you had to multitask in the workplace? (Use your STAR technique, we all have examples of bad days at work when unforeseen issues arose and needed to be dealt with, time management and organisational skills, balancing research with other commitments, teaching, writing & education).

- Could you tell us about the time when your problem solving skills really paid off? (As researchers you may have ready examples or you may use a story/dilemma from your non-professional activities or in-depth knowledge of specific topics)
- Could you describe a situation in which you used initiative? (Are there examples where you suggested positive changes to existing processes or practices? Did you identify inefficiencies? What good ideas have you come up with in the past and how did you act on them? Ability to apply research to real life situations, new and complex concepts)
- Describe a situation in which you motivated others? (Have you had team leadership experience in any capacity? If you cannot think of any specific examples perhaps you could talk about the times that you led and motivated by example. Being a supportive colleague and contributing to a healthy and productive working environment is also motivating to your colleagues.)

### Strengths-based interview

- Some graduate recruiters use “strengths-based interviews” in their recruitment process.
- In contrast to competency-based interviews, in which employers want to understand “what you *CAN* do”, the aim of strengths-based interviews is for an employer to establish “what you really *ENJOY* doing”.
- The focus is on making sure you do more of what you are good at rather than what you are capable of doing.
- Strengths-based interviews have a simple aim:  
To find your interests, motivations and strengths.
- How to prepare for a strengths-based interview:
  - The truth is that you can't do much preparation and are less likely to come up with the overused answers candidates think interviewers want. Think about what energises you, both inside and outside work and be prepared to be open: Don't try to be something you're not. The organisation will have their own reasons for taking this approach and perhaps they want to make sure they secure the right candidate and not need to interview for the same role again six months later.
  - Be honest about what tasks you don't enjoy doing and think about how your preferences might fit with the organisation's culture and the job requirements.
  - Strengths are innate: Talking about strengths gives candidates energy and authenticity.
- Questions you might be asked at strengths-based interviews:
  - What are you good at? (All the answers are in your self-assessment)
  - What do you learn quickly? (This is usually the topic that you are most interested in)
  - What did you find easiest to learn at school or university?
  - What subjects do you most enjoy studying?
  - What things give you energy? (Working environment, colleagues, expectations, goals)
- Other questions:
  - Describe a successful day you have had. (The STAR technique can be used again here)
  - When did you achieve something you were really proud of? (Speak about an achievement in which you invested a lot of time and energy. Then speak about what the achievement meant to you and how much satisfaction/enjoyment it gave you. Speaking about positive experiences will reflect in your body language, making you seem like a positive person.)

- Do you prefer to start tasks or to finish them? (Give reasons for your answer but explain that you are being forced to choose and are quite happy to do both, unless you really do have a preference.)
- Do you find you have enough hours in the day to complete all the things you want to do? (Do you work in an organised and efficient manner? How do you organise/plan your working day? Can you delegate to or help others?)
- What things are always left on your “to do list” and not finished? (How do you prioritise your work and what criteria do you use?)
- What do you enjoy doing the least? (Give reasons for your answer and be conscious that your body language is not too negative)

### Telephone interview – Phone Screening

- Sometimes, recruiters do their initial screening through telephone interviews.
- You should prepare for these as seriously as for a face-to-face interview.
- Much of the impact you make will come through your voice, so it is even more important that you sound animated and enthusiastic. In telephone interviews it can be easier to hide nerves and relax.
- If you smile, it will come across in your voice!
- Allow for possible time delays on the line, don't talk over the other person
- Tips for telephone interviews
  - Ensure you have a suitable environment where you won't be disturbed.
  - Have your CV next to you.
  - Practice before your phone interview.
  - Prepare a smooth opening.
  - Avoid distractions: Don't drink, eat or smoke.

### On the day of the interview

- Dress smart – If in doubt, wear business clothing. It is better to be overdressed than underdressed!
- Punctuality is vital – Ensure that you know where you are going and always account for extra time in case you encounter issues.
- Smile – First impressions count. Be professional and polite from the moment you enter the building. Every person you meet is a potential colleague and they may be asked for their opinion.
- At the end of the interview thank the interviewer(s) for their time and the opportunity to discuss what you have to offer. Ask them when they expect to make a decision and when you should expect a follow-up communication.
- **After the interview.**
- Same tips as after the original application. Answer your phone in a professional manner and have an appropriate voice mail message on your phone.

### Suggested Activities/Workshops to Improve Researcher CV & Interview Skills

In the Tools & Resources section beneath this video you will find the *CV/Interview workshop checklist* and how to list your researcher activities as related skills/competencies.

- 1). A short (2 hours) **workshop for researchers on how to write a CV.**
  - Emphasis given to how to read and respond to a job advert, how to match your CV to the role you are applying for, the structure of your CV and how to compile it.
  - 2). Each workshop participant must submit their updated CV, based on the workshop, within 48 hours. Schedule short (5 minute) one-to-one's to discuss each CV. Make physical corrections on the CV and explain where and why each correction is made. Researcher takes away corrected/improved CV to make final corrections. This is an effective way to develop CV writing skills.

## 2). **Short workshop on Job interviews.**

- Go through each of the topics, interview types, questions, do's and don'ts as described earlier.
- Schedule **simulated interviews** with one person asking questions and another person taking notes on the interview. Once the interview is finished the researcher should be provided with immediate feedback on areas where they can improve their interview techniques.
- Schedule more **formal simulated interviews** (at least two interviewers and the researcher is expected to dress appropriately). For the "formal" interview the researcher is encouraged to bring their mobile phone to the interview. This is placed behind the interviewer and the interview is recorded (audio & visual). After the interview you may then review the recording with the researcher and point out examples of where improvements can be made. There is no GDPR concerns as the interview is recorded on the researcher's own phone.

## CV Workshop Activities

A short (2 hours) **workshop for researchers on how to write a CV.**

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**This is a sample checklist to facilitate CDC staff to lead a successful researchers' CV workshop.** You may use a constructive pattern in stages, or just tick off the relevant activity as completed when you achieve satisfactory results. If possible, attempt to find real job notices from the fields/topics that the researchers are working in. This is slightly more work and time consuming, but it would give the workshop real relevance and achieve better buy-in. The relevant questions could be gathered at the enrolment stage.

<b>Activity: Trainer working with group using PPT.</b>	<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Stage 3</b>
All participants must bring their current CV to the workshop and leave it with the organisers so that improvements may be measured.	first draft Agree action plan		
Trainer briefly explains the reasons why a CV is structured as recommended. Then the trainer can display some sample job adverts and discuss how to read them as an applicant. Read a sample role description and organisation information carefully and consult your skills list and self-assessment results. All of your competencies and experiences that match, or add value, to the role and organisation should be included in your CV.	Make a list of every applicable skill, competency, experience and other relevant information that you wish to include in your CV.	General guidelines for reading a Job Notice. Then give each researcher the job notices that they are expected to adapt their CV to	
At the top of the first page check the contact details. Name, address, telephone number & email address.	Trainer ensures that participants understand the use of bold, italics and fonts etc. Stress the importance of spelling, grammar, dates, spacing etc.		
Next the trainer explains the purpose of the personal profile or statement. Show some slides with examples, good and bad. This is a short paragraph highlighting your strongest characteristics, your goals,	Discuss the purpose of the personal profile/statement. How it can be used and what you can	Give participants 10-15 minutes to write/rewrite their personal statement/profile.	

<p>and matching experiences that coincide with the role and organisation. A shortened version of your “elevator pitch”.</p>	<p>and cannot say with so few words. Your personal statement can be viewed as a Twitter version of your Elevator Pitch.</p>		
<p>Trainer gives each researcher a specific job advert to reply to. They should use the information earlier in the workshop re reading job notices. They should know how highlight their relevant Key Skills in their CV. These are current skills, competencies &amp; experiences that are the closest match to the role, match the working environment and those that match the stated aims of the organisation. Match skills with the required skills outlined for the role.</p>	<p>Explain that most CVs get a very brief “first look”. All of the applicable skills and information need to be in the top half of the first page of the CV</p>	<p>Discuss how to list participant’s closest matching skills first and then related skills and competencies. This makes it very easy for the person giving the CVs a first look to move your CV into the pile for the next stage.</p>	<p>Each participant takes 10-15 minutes to list their key skills and competencies in the CV.</p>
<p>Next is work history. Under each job title in the employment history list duties, responsibilities and achievements. List the dates you started and finished each role. Ensure that dates are correct and sequential. When listing work history, be sure to highlight any competencies, roles or experiences that compliment or add value to the role being applied for.</p>	<p>Explain that not all of your employment history may have a relevance to the role you are applying for. For these roles you may simply include your job title, duties and relevant dates. This will allow space to include more information on the relevant roles. However, be prepared to answer questions on the other roles during the interview.</p>	<p>Discuss other things to include in your relevant work history – including presentations at seminars, conferences. Roles, duties, achievements, responsibilities, qualifications, etc.</p>	<p>Each participant takes 20–30 minutes to fill in their employment history.</p>
<p>Education history, again highlighting any areas that add value to the role or organisation.</p>	<p>Explain how in some (rare) circumstances your education history may have more relevance to the role than employment history. Then education history</p>	<p>Discuss the importance of looking for, and giving prominence to, aspects of your education history that has relevance. Research work, certifications, awards,</p>	<p>Each participant takes 15 minutes to update their education history.</p>

	may be placed first above key skills.	scholarships, teamwork, achievements, experiences, etc.	
Interests/hobbies come next.	Do not include hobbies unless they are real interests. You may be asked about them in the job interview.	Do any of your interests have relevance to the role/organisation?	5 minutes to list hobbies
The final item on your CV will be "References Available Upon Request." Have your reference contact details ready for use and ensure that your referees know that they may be contacted.			

Researchers should hand their amended CV's into the workshop organisers within 48 hours. Each researcher then has a 1-2-1 and written corrections/amendments are made to the CV and explained. The researcher then compiles their final CV.

[Samples](#)

## Job Interviews

Suggested Activities/Workshops to Improve Researcher CV & Interview Skills

### "Important Preparation Points For Job Interviews"

#### 1. Prepare the participant in the role of the researcher to:

- Be familiar with the different interview formats (Traditional/CV, Competency-based, Strengths-based, Telephone, & Whiteboard).
- Before the interview: Research the role and organisation. Ask if the interview will follow a planned format and if the identity of the interviewers has been decided.
- Before the interview: Know your CV inside and out, ensure that you can clarify any gaps. Prepare some questions on the role and organisation.
- Practice your answers to the sample questions provided and your STAR Technique.
- Dress appropriately, be on time, be polite to everybody you meet and smile.
- During the interview: Be aware of your non-verbal communication (body language, handshake, eye contact, gestures & posture).
- Check your social media presence.

#### 2. Preparing Your Questions for The Simulated Interviews (These points are to assist support staff to prepare to conduct interviews. HR may also provide supports/participation in addition to other research staff who may occasionally offer their experience for specific interviews)

- Design questions to check facts, obtain relevant information about an applicant's background, test achievements and assess aptitude and potential.

- Ask **specific questions** about the applicant's work experience, qualifications, skills, abilities, ambitions and strengths/weaknesses.
- Ask **open questions**, i.e., those beginning with what, which, why, how, where, when and who, rather than closed questions which result in simple yes or no answers.
- Ask questions that are **challenging**, but never ask them in an intimidatory or aggressive tone or manner.
- Ask questions that require the applicant **to give examples** of real situations that he or she has experienced, for example: "Tell me about a time when you had to discipline a member of your staff. How did you handle it?"
- Ask **factual questions** about past experience and behaviour and refrain from making assumptions

### 3. Simulated Job Interview activity

- You will conduct the interview and ask questions. Another participant/trainer is required to take notes on how the questions are answered (information provided, tone, was the question answered fully? Body language and other non-verbal cues, presentation (dress) etc.
- Feedback provided to researcher immediately after the interview. Positive aspects are recognised and suggestions for improvements are made.
- "Formal" simulated interviews scheduled. All participants are expected to dress and act appropriately. Ideally there would be two interviewers asking prepared questions.
- The researcher is invited to bring their phone to the interview. The phone is then placed behind the interviewers (facing the researchers) and the interview is recorded. After the interview the researcher and interviewers may then review the interview recorded on the telephone and specific areas for improvement are pointed out. The researcher, of course, keeps the recording on their phone and can review it to improve their techniques.
- Ask groups to report on what they have learned and how they have improved

## Short workshop on Job interviews.

- Go through each of the topics, interview types, questions, do's and don'ts as described earlier.
- Schedule **simulated interviews** with one person asking questions and another person taking notes on the interview. Once the interview is finished the researcher should be provided with immediate feedback on areas where they can improve their interview techniques.
- Schedule more **formal simulated interviews** (at least two interviewers and the researcher is expected to dress appropriately). For the "formal" interview the researcher is encouraged to bring their mobile phone to the interview. This is placed behind the interviewer and the interview is recorded (audio & visual). After the interview you may then review the recording with the researcher and point out examples of where improvements can be made. There is no GDPR concerns as the interview is recorded on the researcher's own phone.

### The Interview and Sample Questions:

During an interview the employer will look for:

- Evidence of your skills/and competencies (Can you do the job?)
- Your interests and passions, your motivations (Will you do the job?)

- Your personality and values, if you match their ethos and culture (Will you fit it in?)

The better prepared that you are for the interview, the more confident you will feel and the easier it will be to answer the interview questions. You won't always know what type of interview the employer will use so it is best to prepare for a few:

- **Traditional interview**
- **Competency-based interview**
- **Strengths-based interview**
- **Telephone interview** – Can be used for phone screening or preliminary interview
- **Whiteboard interview** – Some researchers have experienced this whereby they would be asked to solve problems, explain or discuss ideas using a whiteboard during an interview.

Interview Questions:

Most common questions asked during a traditional interview:

- How would you describe yourself? (Remember your Elevator Pitch?)
- Could you tell us about your present / last job? (Say only positive things about your last role and employer. Discuss the elements of the role that best relate to the role you are interviewing for)
- What do you know about our organisation? (This is an opportunity for you to show that you have done your research)
- Why would you like to work for (name of organisation)? Discuss what you understand to be the future direction of the organisation and how they fit in with your own goals and plans. Explain how you can contribute to this and what you hope to gain in return in terms of new experiences, (team or group) achievements, new competencies and career progression etc. Help them to understand that you see an alignment between your own personal goals and those of the organisation.
- Why do you think you might be a better fit than other applicants with similar experience and qualifications? (This is where you can discuss the positive elements of your personality that apply to this role and your values that match the stated ethos of the organisation).
- Why are you the best person for this role? (Your motivations and passions. This is where your Interests assessment will give you plenty to discuss).
- What is your main strength? (If any of your motivated skills match the required skills of the role discuss these first as your motivation will come through naturally)
- What is your main weakness? (Discuss a training workshop that you recently completed or are about to take. The theme of the training could be used as an example of how you identify your own areas for development & upskilling)
- **Competency-based interview**
  - In a Competency-based Interview the questions are designed to help candidates give evidence of the competencies that are needed to perform well in the role. Usually, you will be expected to give an example of how you have demonstrated these competencies in the past.
- Competencies that employers want or value:
  - Communication (The job interview itself is an excellent opportunity to display your communication skills)
  - Interpersonal;
  - Teamwork;
  - Problem solving;

- Organisational;
  - Multi-tasking;
  - Flexibility;
  - Adaptability;
  - Positive attitude;
  - Initiative; and
  - IT related literacy
- The most common and frequently asked competency-based interview questions:
    - Could you tell us about the time when you used your communication skills effectively? (You could talk about presentations, your ability to communicate research findings, including conferences, seminars, written publications and convey scientific information to a variety of audiences, public engagement or outreach activities, team leading etc. You will have many examples)
    - Could you tell us about the time when you used your interpersonal skills? (Client skills. One to one relationship with colleagues, supporting or helping colleagues or peers, positive team working experiences, dealing with sensitive issues, etc.)
    - Can you provide us with an example of when you had to multitask in the workplace? (Use your STAR technique, we all have examples of bad days at work when unforeseen issues arose and needed to be dealt with, time management and organisational skills, balancing research with other commitments, teaching, writing & education).
    - Could you tell us about the time when your problem solving skills really paid off? (As researchers you may have ready examples or you may use a story/dilemma from your non-professional activities or in-depth knowledge of specific topics)
    - Could you describe a situation in which you used initiative? (Are there examples where you suggested positive changes to existing processes or practices? Did you identify inefficiencies? What good ideas have you come up with in the past and how did you act on them? Ability to apply research to real life situations, new and complex concepts)
    - Describe a situation in which you motivated others? (Have you had team leadership experience in any capacity? If you cannot think of any specific examples perhaps you could talk about the times that you led and motivated by example. Being a supportive colleague and contributing to a healthy and productive working environment is also motivating to your colleagues.)
  - **Strengths-based interview**
    - Some graduate recruiters use “strengths-based interviews” in their recruitment process.
    - In contrast to competency-based interviews, in which employers want to understand “what you *CAN* do”, the aim of strengths-based interviews is for an employer to establish “what you really *ENJOY* doing”.
    - The focus is on making sure you do more of what you are good at rather than what you are capable of doing.
    - Strengths-based interviews have a simple aim:  
To find your interests, motivations and strengths.
  - Questions you might be asked at strengths-based interviews:
    - What are you good at? (All the answers are in your self-assessment)
    - What do you learn quickly? (This is usually the topic that you are most interested in)
    - What did you find easiest to learn at school or university?
    - What subjects do you most enjoy studying?

- What things give you energy? (Working environment, colleagues, expectations, goals)
- Other questions:
  - Describe a successful day you have had. (The STAR technique can be used again here)
  - When did you achieve something you were really proud of? (Speak about an achievement in which you invested a lot of time and energy. Then speak about what the achievement meant to you and how much satisfaction/enjoyment it gave you. Speaking about positive experiences will reflect in your body language, making you seem like a positive person.)
  - Do you prefer to start tasks or to finish them? (Give reasons for your answer but explain that you are being forced to choose and are quite happy to do both, unless you really do have a preference.)
  - Do you find you have enough hours in the day to complete all the things you want to do? (Do you work in an organised and efficient manner? How do you organise/plan your working day? Can you delegate to or help others?)
  - What things are always left on your “to do list” and not finished? (How do you prioritise your work and what criteria do you use?)
  - What do you enjoy doing the least? (Give reasons for your answer and be conscious that your body language is not too negative)

# Practical & accessible online tools to support self-directed career/professional development

## Learning outcome

To provide you enough information, support and tools to guide researchers through the self-directed VIPS (Values, Interests, Personality, Skills) process and offer feedback, advice and information.

This approach should allow the researchers to engage in an informed career decision-making process that assists them to find satisfying and fulfilling work-related opportunities that will motivate them to reach their potential.

Researchers develop knowledge of their career options and choices.

Researchers identify relevant industries connected to their research knowledge.

The training should end with a personal action plan (drawn up by the researcher) that is based on clear, sequential and complimentary goals.

## Desired Impact:

Researchers can self-assess their skills and capabilities and articulate these strengths when necessary.

Use this information to plan a career pathway that takes into consideration each researcher's skills set and specific requirements.

## **Objectives:**

One of the many challenges to getting researchers to “buy-in” and engage with CDC's is the realities of the researcher's everyday lives. Demands on their time include lab work, analysis, teaching, writing, publishing, networking, seeking contracts, social & family activities, funding/grant applications, communication of research results etc.

Peer-to-peer recommendations are the best and most effective advertising so we must deliver on the implicit promise of Career Development and Planning. The same is true for one-to-one activities and workshops, every contact with researchers is an opportunity to sell the benefits of CDC activities. When we promote tools and resources to compliment our CDC activities the tools must produce usable outputs and results that move the researcher on to the next step in the process. By keeping each step in the process as simple and responsive as possible we will increase the number of positive experiences that researchers have with their CDC's.

Under the Tools & Resources tab directly beneath this video you will find links to the tools discussed here for self-assessment, career exploration, development and planning.

Here are the **recommended sequential steps** to self-directed career development as supported by EURAXESS.

1. Where am I now? The researcher completes an appraisal of their current situation and prospects.

2. Self-assessment

Interests

Values

Skills

Personality

These four tools/questionnaires assist the researcher to prioritise their passions, values and beliefs, motivated skills and personality in a way that will provide strong indications/signposts regarding potential career paths.

3. Self-assessment interpretations. The researcher can make a short list of potential career options indicated by the self-assessment results. Coaching or guidance would also be helpful at

this stage, challenging the researcher to explain their self-assessment interpretations and articulate what their next steps should be.

**4. Careers Exploration.** Research is done on potential/suggested career paths. What qualifications/training are required? Is the expected remuneration adequate? Will travel/relocation be required? Is this a sector/profession that is expanding/in demand or is demand expected to decline? How long will it take for all of the required steps?

**5. Setting Goals, Development & Career Planning - Reality Testing.** When a specific career path has been identified/agreed upon the researcher must develop an action plan to specify how they will achieve their agreed career goals. The plan must be as detailed as possible, listing required training, dates of when particular milestones must be met, sequential steps, contacts that must be made, and any other competencies that need to be acquired. Is each step and goal in the plan realistic?

**6. Seeking Relevant Training & Experience.** Working from their action plan, the researcher will find and enrol in identified training and applicable activities that will add relevant experiences.

**7. CV & Interview Skills.** The CDC should offer workshops and advice on CV & Interview skills with an emphasis on communication skills, particularly the articulation of competencies, achievements and goals.

**8. Job Searching.** Seeking relevant employment in the identified sector.

**How Many Tools and what are they?** There are many different tools and resources available to support CDC activities. The tools in the ASSET resource have been chosen for their quality, practicality and they are open and free to use (an email address may be needed for some). They are a combination of e-booklets and websites. Here's a brief description and purpose of each tool.

**1. Job.ac.uk- Career Development Toolkit for Researchers E-book**

<https://www.jobs.ac.uk/media/pdf/careers/resources/career-development-toolkit-for-researchers.pdf> link?

Designed for post-doctoral researchers who are considering their overall career progress to date or are considering laying out or changing their career plans. The booklet consists of three main sections:

a. **Stop & Take Stock.** Where am I now? Review your experience, contributions, skills and attributes.

b. **Assessing your academic career.** Your motivations and academic career progress checks. Research plans and strategy development. Involving others in your career development. Training and development actions.

c. **Considering alternative career options.** Identifying career change clues. Research career options.

**2. Job.ac.uk - 10 Career Paths for PhDs (ebooklet).**

<https://www.jobs.ac.uk/media/pdf/careers/resources/10-career-paths-for-phds.pdf>

Designed for PhD's or early career researchers thinking of a career outside of academia and want to know the types of job opportunities open to researchers. Contains information on using researcher skills outside of academia, translating your skills outside of academia, relevant case studies, 10 alternative career paths, working in other sectors.

**3. Job.ac.uk - The 5-Minute Career Action Plan (ebooklet).**

<https://www.jobs.ac.uk/media/pdf/careers/resources/the-5-minute-career-action-plan.pdf>

An excellent and well designed resource to assist researchers to plan their development and career. Contains templates for self-assessment interpretation, goal setting and action planning.

**4. My IDP – Science Careers (website).** <http://myidp.sciencecareers.org/>

Designed to structure your Individual Development Plan (IDP) and assist to identify long-term career goals that fit with your unique skills, interests and values. Consists of skills, interests, and values assessments that provide outputs that are unique to each user. My IDP will also assist with goal setting and planning.

5. **PsychCentral (website).** <https://psychcentral.com/quizzes/personality/start.php>  
Personality test that will provide you with an output for the personality aspect of the VIPS process.
6. **National Postdoctoral Association (website).**  
<https://www.nationalpostdoc.org/page/CoreCompetencies>  
A simple resource that itemises researcher core competencies. Can be used to assist with the Skills Audit.
7. **Euraxess - DISCOVER – Careers Beyond Academia (website).**  
<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/career-development/researchers/discover-careers-beyond-academia>  
Information on the possibilities and options for careers in sectors beyond academia. Contains sections on sector information, jobs & competencies, planning your career, and career stories.
8. **Euraxess - INTERACT- Academia Reaching Out To Business (website).**  
<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/career-development/organisations/resources-and-tools/engagement-tool>. Includes information on researcher engagement activities, economic sectors & occupations, potential labour markets for research skills, information for employers thinking of hiring researchers.

## **Tools & Resources**

**The Sequential Steps and where these tools may be applied.** EURAXESS support staff will quickly become familiar with these tools over time. However, it is recommended that individuals become accustomed to one tool at a time, maximising its benefits before using the other tools.

1. 1. Where am I now? - The Career Development Toolkit for Researchers (pages 1 - 10) provides templates and tips to encourage an objective analysis of a researcher's career to date. [Career Development Toolkit for Researchers E-book](#)
2. Self-assessment – The *My IDP – Science Careers* website is our main and most effective self-assessment tool. [myIDP Online Tool](#)
  - Interests – The *My IDP-Science Careers* Interests Assessment is intended to help researchers to define the tasks they enjoy doing and would like to include as integral elements of their career. The output is the researchers' various interests categorised and listed according to the researchers' personal preferences. <https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/Interests/QuickTips>
  - Values – The *My IDP-Science Careers* Values Assessment is intended to help the researcher to answer the questions “What is most important to me?” and “What rewards or outcomes do I want from my work?” The output is the researchers' various interests categorised and listed according to the researchers' personal preferences. <https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/Values/QuickTips>
  - Skills Audit – Researchers should make a list of all of their skills, including skills from non-research roles in the past. They may use the *National Postdoctoral Association* websites list of postdoctoral core competencies as a prompt for skills they may have forgotten about or perhaps as training suggestion. <https://www.nationalpostdoc.org/page/CoreCompetencies>  
Once the skills list is finished it should be divided into 4 categories:

Motivated Skills (skills I enjoy using)  
 Development Skills (skills I would like to develop and use more)  
 Burnout Skills (skills I would prefer not to use)  
 Skills not considered important at this time  
 Lastly, of all the skills listed, note those that are transferable to other roles/sectors.

Like the interests and values output from *My IDP*, the completed list of motivated skills is yet another indicator of possible career paths/choices. The *My IDP-Science Careers Skills Assessment* helps the researcher to identify the scientific skills and knowledge areas in which a researcher is proficient and those that could be improved. It is based on NPA's core competencies. The output categorises the researcher's skills according to proficiency. <https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/Skills/QuickTips>

Personality – The *PsychCentral* personality test provides a very basic personality description. The researcher should be encouraged to discuss what areas they feel are accurate and use them accordingly. There are many similar free personality tests available online. This is not a diagnostic personality instrument but merely another indicator to be used for possible career choices. <https://psychcentral.com/quizzes/personality/start.php>

3. Self-assessment interpretations – At this stage the researcher will have collated the following development/career options indicators:
- The templates from pages 1-10 of the Career Development Toolkit for Researchers (Career Decision Making, Job/Contract Review, Overall Career Review, Academic Career Progress, Career Progress Check & Development Strategy). <https://www.jobs.ac.uk/media/pdf/careers/resources/career-development-toolkit-for-researchers.pdf>
  - My IDP Assessment outputs on Interests, Values and Skills.
  - The results of the researcher's own Skills Audit results, especially the Motivated Skills listed.
  - The Personality test.
- This is a tremendous amount of information that should be of huge benefit to informing the researcher's decision making. There is usually a consistency in these numerous indicators that point the researcher in a general, if not more specific, direction.

4. Careers Exploration – The general indications from the self-assessment results will suggest possible career options to the researcher. These careers will need to be researched in terms of available opportunities, salary scales, necessary competencies, required timescale, lifestyle implications, etc. The *Career Development Toolkit for Researchers* (pages 11 - 13) provides tips and templates for identifying career change clues, prompted by the self-assessment results. <https://www.jobs.ac.uk/media/pdf/careers/resources/career-development-toolkit-for-researchers.pdf>
- 10 Career Paths for PhDs* explores PhD routes and pathways, generating career ideas and options. How to transfer research skills, moving out of academia and, as the name implies, there are 10 suggested career paths for academic researchers. *DISCOVER-Careers Beyond Academia* offers information and testimonials on where researchers are working, how they feel about their roles and what competencies are most valued. *INTERACT-Academia Reaching out to Business* offers ideas to EURAXESS CDC's wishing to engage and co-operate with business/industry. Researchers are offered information on potential labour markets and there is also a section for employers, detailing the skills and competencies that researchers can offer.

5. **Setting Goals, Development & Career Planning - Reality Testing.** Once the researcher decides upon a general career path they will need to draw up an action plan, itemising short and long term goals. The goals will detail (as much as possible) all identified/required training and the desired sequential career steps.  
*The 5-Minute Career Action Plan* is an excellent resource that focuses the mind of the researcher on the important questions that inform an action plan.  
*My IDP-Science Careers* provides practical advice and templates for goal setting and planning.  
At this point face to face coaching or guidance would be most beneficial. The researcher needs to be challenged on the results of their self-assessment and their action plan. This is done in a conversational way using open ended questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer. Questions should focus on why, how, and when regarding the action plan.
6. **Seeking Relevant Training & Experience –** Once the action plan is finalised the researcher is essentially self-directed. They may still contact the CDC seeking information on required training, possible industry secondments, and possible job opportunities.
- 7. CV & Interview Skills.**  
Workshops and advice on CV writing (ASSET)  
Interview skills (ASSET)
- 8. Job Searching.**  
**Euraxess - DISCOVER – Careers Beyond Academia (website).**  
<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/career-development/researchers/discover-careers-beyond-academia>  
**Euraxess - INTERACT- Academia Reaching Out To Business (website).**  
<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/career-development/organisations/resources-and-tools/engagement-tool>

## Terms of use, Acknowledgements and Contact details

EURAXESS - Researchers in Motion is a unique pan-European initiative delivering information and support services to professional researchers. Backed by the European Union and its Member States, it supports researcher mobility and career development, while enhancing scientific collaboration between Europe and the world.

The ASSET tool was prepared within the framework of the EURAXESS TOPIV project (Gr.No: 786133) and funded by the EC under the Horizon 2020 programme.

EURAXESS TOP IV impacts of the project are linked to increasing the visibility of the EURAXESS Network and diversifying the services provided by the EURAXESS Service Centres at an increased quality to enhance the career development of researchers addressing the cross-national and international circulation of researchers in Europe for the benefit of Responsible Research and Innovation under HORIZON 2020. More information may be found at the EURAXESS website: <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/>

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The ASSET Tool was compiled/developed by Dean Hogan, Career Coach & Trainer, Dublin & Krassimira Tantcheva, Projects Manager, British Council, Sofia.

We would also like to thank our colleague Marjolaine Le Gallo (Executive Director, Brest International Mobility Centre, France) for her contribution.

The ASSET Tool contains the following resources:

***Career Development Toolkit for Researchers.*** Ebooklet developed by **Clare Jones**, Senior Careers Advisor at Nottingham University.

***MyIDP, Science Careers Individual Development Plan.*** Authors: **Cynthia Fuhrmann**, PhD, **Jennifer A Hobin**, PhD, Bill Lindstaedt, MS, **Philip Clifford**, Associate Dean for Research in the College of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago and Director of Mentoring and Professional Development for the UIC Center for Clinical and Translational Science.

***PsychCentral, 16-Type Jungian Personality Test,*** Website.

***The National Postdoctoral Association's Core Competencies,*** Website, The National Postdoctoral Association.

***10 Career Paths for PhDs,*** Ebooklet, Edited and Co-Authored by Jayne Sharples, Freelance Coach and Consultant.

***Discover: Careers Beyond Academia,*** website, EURAXESS Network.

***Interact: Academia Reaching out to Business,*** website, EURAXESS Network.

**The 5 Minute Career Action Plan**, Ebooklet, Authored by Dr.Wendy Broad, Independent career and professional development consultant.

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[EURAXESS WORLDWIDE](#)
[MY EURAXESS](#)
[EXTRANET](#)

( [BACK TO INTRODUCTION](#) )

### Researcher Career Development Toolkit

Training module for EURAXESS staff in Researcher Career Development with links to the relevant resources where applicable.

INTRODUCTION
This TUTORIAL was developed to train EURAXESS staff in the delivery of effective RCD services
Career options
Access self-service e-tool (ASSET)
1) Introduction to ASSET
2) Setting up a career development centre
(2a) Training Resources Bank
(2b) Models for Events & Activities

**INTRODUCTION TO ACCESS SELF-SERVICE E-TOOL (ASSET)**

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