

Post-doctoral professional career development: Reference person's guide

1. Introduction

This document is intended as a reference person's guide to the self-assessment questionnaire created for postdocs. It applies to the positions of: Junior lecturer, UNIL Lecturer, Lecturer Ambizione SNSF, SNSF Professor or Assistant Professor. It is applicable to both tenure-track and non-tenure track professor positions.

You have been contacted by a postdoc because you are their supervisor, group leader, project principal-applicant, professor at the faculty of the postdoc, or a postdoc has identified you as resource person, even if you work at a different faculty or university.

The postdoc will send you the questionnaire (completed or partially completed), their CV, and a clear indication of why they are seeking your guidance as a reference person.

It is important from the start to clarify the postdoc's expectations and goals, identifying what can be improved directly, or during the course of your collaboration.

At this stage, your role is to meet with the postdoc. Discuss the results of their self-assessment, and any other issues that may arise.

The following eight main points from the self-assessment questionnaire may serve as a starting point for your initial meeting:

- Publication
- Oral communication skills/ conferences
- Research project proposals (fundraising or scholarships)
- Teaching and leadership
- Knowledge and competencies
- Collaboration and networking
- Institutional, scientific and social involvement
- Careers: mid-term and long-term objectives

This initial meeting lasts 1-2 hours on average, and is intended as an informal private consultation. The meeting is meant as an opportunity for the postdoc to benefit from your opinions and experiences. It is not expected that you provide complete answers to all of the postdoc's specific questions.

It is not necessary to document this meeting, but if you do, remember that none of the documents from your meeting can be forwarded to the HR department, nor to the Dean's Office.

2. Your role at the meeting

During the meeting, listen attentively, and keep the discussion constructive. An atmosphere of frankness and integrity is essential to facilitate discussion of the postdoc's:

- current position and research progress
- potential to become an independent researcher
- realistic goals for the continuation of their academic (or non-academic) career.

At the conclusion of the meeting, determine whether more long-term individual support is necessary. This meeting may prove to be sufficient. If needed, decide on another meeting or help the postdoc to find another resource person within another field or domain (e.g., someone with non-academic experience).

3. Your personal benefits

Supporting the next generation of researchers is, in principle, the responsibility of all established researchers. This relationship is mutually beneficial and may offer you opportunities for improvement, as well as to keep you up to date and aware of current research.

You have available a document titled "Resources" that lists the principal sources of information available at UNIL (in the form of directives, measures, and workshops) as well as external resources at UNIL (training courses, academic publications, and general publications) for the eight main points addressed by the postdoc's self-assessment questionnaire.

This meeting is an opportunity for you to:

- gain experience in offering constructive feedback
- inform yourself of the demands placed upon the new generation of researchers, and in doing so, understand better the ways in which your own field of research may be evolving
- experience the satisfaction of helping the postdoc improve and reach their goals