

**Early Career Researchers:**  
**Questions to support reflection for completion of an ECR SRDS form**

Please consider the reach of these activities locally within your lab/research group, departmental, university-wide, national, and international. Please feel free to pick a selection of the possibilities suggested below that are most relevant for you, or that you wish to focus on at this time. These points are for guidance and reflection; you do not have to have answers to all of them at each SRDS review.

If your fixed term contract is due to finish before the next SRDS round it is still vital that you have an SRDS review and the meeting should focus on discussing the past year, providing feedback to you on what you've done and setting objectives for the time during which you will still be with the University in order to maximise your career development.

For all of the following points, please describe your high and low points, what you have found satisfying/challenging and the progress made towards objectives you have previously set.

**COMPLETING SECTION A/B/C:**

**1. Research**

Research Achievements:

1. Discuss the generation of research data and how you have put research protocols in operation
2. How have you reached the milestones in your research programme?
3. What techniques and methodology have you developed?

Scholarly Communication:

1. How regularly do you write up your research results?
2. What manuscripts do you have in preparation/submitted/accepted?
3. What other writing have you been involved in e.g. review articles or patents?
4. Have you considered asking senior colleagues if you can support them in reviewing papers/ grants? Would you consider being a peer reviewer and writing a review report?
5. What conferences you have attended this year, what and how did you present and what have you gained from them?
6. What conferences can you attend to broaden your research horizon and visibility and what would you present? How will you fund your attendance?
7. What is the timetable for publishing the papers that will optimise your chances of moving to the next stage of your career? In answering this question you should consider what experimentation is still necessary, how long it will take for the paper(s) to be written, how long the review process will take and whether there will be time to respond to the inevitable referees comments.

Income Generation and Research Independence:

1. What are the funding opportunities that you have now?
2. How do you write/contribute to writing research bids with your senior colleagues e.g. such as writing a grant as a co-PI? Are you contributing to research ideas and bid development within your research group or with collaborators?
3. How do you develop an understanding of the funding landscape in your discipline, the types of funding available and how are you keeping yourself informed? Do you discuss potential funding streams with your colleagues/mentor/line manager? Have you considered Fellowships?

4. Have you considered applying for a summer undergraduate research project award (e.g. SURE)?
5. Which travel awards would allow you to visit another research group?
6. How are you building your research independence?
7. Are you developing new research ideas, which could build future research proposals and are you keeping track of these ideas? Are you starting to write them into potential proposals?
8. What type of preliminary data would you need in a research proposal to fund your research idea
9. What are the new techniques and methodologies you should be learning to take your current and future research forward? Who can help you with this?
10. Who will be your reference/sponsor when you apply for a job & research fund?
11. Are you building relationships with colleagues to get support with reviewing your research proposal, fellowship applications?
12. What is the timetable for making the applications necessary for the next stage of your career? If you are intending to apply for an Independent Research Fellowship how many years post-PhD are you and what are the eligibility criteria of your intended funders?

#### Research Impact: Outreach, widening participation and public engagement:

1. How are you contributing to the impact agenda for your research project?
2. Would you consider:
  - a. writing short articles about your research for learned societies magazine or other non-specialist publications
  - b. recording a short video/ podcast describing your research (e.g. to be uploaded on iTunesU)
3. What event could you prepare for the next Science and Engineering week, Festival of the mind or other science related festival? How would you fund it?
4. Are you supporting your department during school visits? What ideas could you develop for workshops and activities for school visits, UCAS days etc.?
5. Would you consider writing a press release when you next publish a significant scientific paper?
6. Do you have a personal webpage/blog describing your research interest and expertise?
7. Are you developing a network to become an invited speaker in departments outside the university?

#### Research Impact: Engaging with industry

1. Do you attend InKForge or other industry-linked events?
2. Do you attend university-wide workshops/ events on innovation, enterprise and commercialisation?
3. Have you developed your knowledge and understanding about commercialisation, intellectual property, patenting etc.?
4. Do you network with industry representatives at internal and external workshops and conferences?
5. Have you considered the commercial potential of your research and explored ways to exploit this?
6. Have you researched potential industry collaborators working in your field or opportunities for research funding with an industry collaborator?

#### Collaboration:

1. Would you consider setting up a seminar series in your department or across disciplinary boundaries?
2. Would you consider organising a research network?
3. Who are the competing research groups related to your research?
4. Are you pro-active in developing your research network, independently seeking new collaborators?
5. Are you seeking collaborators from diverse disciplines?
6. Are your collaborators local, national, international colleagues? Can you consider extending the range of collaborators?
7. Do you take the opportunity to talk to visitors during external guest departmental seminars?

## **2. Teaching & Supervision**

1. How many students have you supervised/ mentored formally and informally? (e.g. UG, Master students, summer projects, PhD students) Are you discussing with your PI your approach to the supervision of project/PhD students?
2. Are you proposing possible projects for students in your research group?
3. What type of teaching opportunity do you have in your department and have you discussed teaching opportunities with your PI? Could you diversify the teaching opportunities that you have?
4. Would you consider facilitating discussion based small group sessions for the Faculty Module on research ethics & integrity (module offered as teaching opportunity to Postdocs in the Faculty)?
5. Could you negotiate preparing & giving a lecture on your PI's UG/ Master course?
6. How do you engage in discussion with your PI about their approach to teaching? Could you shadow some of their lectures, discuss how they are setting up exam papers and issues with marking?
7. Would you consider setting up a journal club or study support for UG/ Master students?
8. What are the teaching opportunities outside of your department/University (e.g. becoming a tutor on Open University course, teaching specific techniques at summer school)?
9. Do you have understanding & knowledge of curriculum development, marking or processes of external course evaluation? How could you develop such understanding? Are there opportunities for discussions/ shadowing in your department?
10. Are you seeking to gain a formal teaching accreditation such as The Sheffield Teaching Assistant, HEA recognition, or other types of teaching qualification?
11. How do you keep a log of feedback provided to you by students?

## **3. Administration**

1. Are you keeping yourself informed of current research & science policy?

### Seminars:

2. Are you making suggestions of external speakers for departmental seminars?
3. Do you organise a seminar series?

### Committees:

4. Are you involved in a Faculty Committee e.g. research staff association, Postdoc society?

5. Are you aware of the different Committees in your department? Are you involved in a departmental committee?
6. Do you attend departmental staff meetings?

Research Management:

7. What do you know about research budgets and managing research funding? What do you need to know? Who can help you in developing a better awareness of grants financial management?

**COMPLETING SECTION C:**

Ensure you consult with the following documents that should have been sent to you with your SRDS form:

- The Departmental objectives/research strategy for department/faculty you work in
- Grade profile document

**4. Continued Professional Development**

- What is your strategy for job applications going to consist of?
  - How are you going to approach the task of applying for jobs in a competitive market?
- How integrated do you feel in your research group, department, the university?
- Are there external factors impacting your performance that you may want to consider in reviewing the year and planning your objectives?

**COMPLETING SECTION D:**

**1. How many days am I entitled to spend on career development?**

SET for Success (the Roberts' Report 2002) recommends a researcher spends 10 days per annum on professional development activities. A Concordat to support the career development of researchers was launched by the Government in 2008 in response to the Roberts' Report. This has the support of Universities UK, and Research Councils UK. The University of Sheffield subscribes to uphold the Concordat principles. The Concordat sets out 7 guiding principles including the recognition of a researcher's personal career development (Principle 4) and a researcher's shared responsibility (with managers) to engage with their own development.

The University of Sheffield Staff Development Policy Guidelines: Subject to discussion with, and the agreement of, their manager, and taking into account the particular needs of a member of staff, the equivalent of up to five days per annum of off-the-job staff development activity (this may increase for those new to the University or new to a role within the University).

**2. Where can I get further support?**

**Professional Development programmes available at TUoS:**

Think Ahead: a programme for ECRs across the University- accessible for ALL ECRs

The University of Sheffield has a comprehensive researcher training and development programme, 'Think Ahead' to support your career development. Further information can be found at:

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/faculty/science/researchers>

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/faculty/medicine-dentistry-health/thinkahead/catalogue>

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/ecr>

Booking: Think ahead programme in LMS: <https://lms.shef.ac.uk/index.php#TA>

Sheffield Teaching Assistant: run by Learning and Teaching Services:

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/lets/cpd/sta>

Staff Development Programme: online resources and workshops coordinated by Human Resources

- Development everywhere: <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/sld/developmenteverywhere>

- The Sheffield leader: <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/sld/lmd/sheffieldleader>

- Workshops bookings: <https://lms.shef.ac.uk/index.php#>

Skills Seminars in the DDP programme- also accessible by ECR

[http://ris.dept.shef.ac.uk/skills\\_seminars/](http://ris.dept.shef.ac.uk/skills_seminars/)

### **National Support for Researchers:**

For national researcher career development support please see Vitae's website:

<http://www.vitae.ac.uk/>

### **3. How can mentoring support my career development?**

Mentoring will supply you with professional guidance to help **support you through all stages of your career** here and into your next position whether that is within the academic environment or in one of the hundreds of alternative career paths.

Your mentor will be a member of academic staff outside your Dept. All our mentors are trained and experienced in **helping researchers to take control of their career** through established mentoring and coaching techniques.

#### **Mentoring can help you:**

- to understand your options
- support in finding creative ways to deal with a difficult person or situation
- help to plan your career development
- to discuss Fellowships
- to balance your workload
- to improve your confidence
- to raise your profile as a researcher
- to make new contacts and networks

For more information: <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/ecr/mentoring/index>