# Queen's University Belfast

## Postdoctoral Development Centre

# New Postdoc Welcome Booklet

This document is intended to regroup extensive but non-exhaustive information to help new postdocs and researchers settle in Queen's University Belfast and has been elaborated by the Postdoctoral Development Centre.

It has been designed to be consulted on a computer and contains numerous links to relevant webpages.

Please do not print this document as you would lose the information contained in the links and unnecessarily impact the environment.



This document is regularly updated, and we do our best to provide the most helpful and accurate information possible. However, if you identify any inaccurate, outdated information or dead links, please notify the PDC.

This document has been last updated on: 29/08/2023

The most recent version can be downloaded on the PDC's New postdoc page or requested by email at pdc@qub.ac.uk.

You are now a postdoc or researcher at Queen's University Belfast

Congratulations!

We are delighted to welcome you as a new member of the university's vibrant postdoctoral community and have designed this postdoc handbook to help you settle in your new role.

A postdoc is a transient development role, and it is a very exciting opportunity to acquire new skills, experience and network on which to build your future career. In order to support you in this process, the University enables research staff to spend up to 10 days per year on activities related to their career development and has recently invested in the creation of the Postdoctoral Development Centre (PDC).

The PDC is here to help you progress your career, in and out of academia, as well as ensure you have a positive experience at Queen's. It is principally achieved by providing appropriate information, bespoke resources (workshops, events etc.), one-to-one support, as well as promoting a supportive environment and culture across the university.

You can follow the activity of the PDC by visiting the PDC website, follow the PDC on Twitter and through the update emails and newsletters sent to your staff email.

I wish you a lot of success in your new role and hope to see you soon at the PDC,

Kind regards,

Alice

Dr Alice Dubois

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Follow the PDC:
PDC Website: qub.ac.uk/sites/pdc/ | PDC Twitter: @QUBpostdoc

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## What is a postdoc?

A postdoctoral researcher (postdoc) is a member of staff who conducts research on a position requiring a doctoral degree (PhD). This position is usually a temporary, mentored training position aimed at equipping the postdoctoral researcher with skills facilitating their transition to their career of choice. At Queen's, postdocs are often hired as "Research fellow" or "Senior research fellow" depending on their experience and job description (See generic job descriptions - look for academic Ac2). While this booklet and the PDC are driven by the role and needs of postdocs, they are (at least in part) also helpful to research staff employed on other types of contracts.

Postdocs are generally funded by grants awarded to their Principal Investigator (PI) but a small amount of them, the fellowship holders, have obtained their own funding through a competitive process. There are different stages of fellowships with different levels of mentoring by a senior academic. Fellows are either transitioning to independence or are working on their own independent research ideas. Fellowship holders usually have the name of their fellowship as job title (*i.e.,* MRF research fellow) and have a job description similar to the Research fellows or Senior research fellows depending on the type of fellowship. At Queen's, they receive additional specific support via the Fellowship Academy (see Fellowship holders' section).

Postdocs mostly conduct research, by planning, conducting and analysing experiments, and communicate research through the publication of papers, presentations at conferences and participating in public engagement events. They can also be involved in lab or group management, assist with the writing of grant applications, carry out some teaching activities including the supervision and mentoring of students, or get involved in committees and the organisation of events.

It is important to note that postdocs are not students, permanent staff or on a direct track to a lectureship position. The fixed-term nature of their contracts mean that they will eventually have to apply to a different position to progress their career, in or out of the university.

Postdocs are responsible for their own career development, which is supported by their PI and university departments such as the Postdoctoral Development Centre. Postdocs at Queen's are entitled to up to 10 days per year to spend on career development activities as well as a yearly Personal Development Review (PDR) and career development meetings.

## Queen's

## Structure of the University

The University is led by the President and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ian Greer, who presides over the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor as well as Vice-Presidents. The Vice-Presidents provide leadership to multiple Directorates focusing on the functioning of the institution (People & Culture, Research and Enterprise, Estates…). The Provost and Deputy Vice-

Chancellor oversees a team of Pro-Vice-Chancellors, who are either in charge of a Faculty or a specific aspect of the business (e.g., Research and Enterprise, Global engagement etc.).

Queen's University Belfast encompasses three faculties. Each Faculty englobes a number of Schools, which are directed by Heads of Schools with the support of a School Manager, and at times a Deputy Head of School, and may include research centres focusing on specific areas of research, such as the three centres in the School of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences or the Astrophysics Research Centre.

## Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences (MHLS)

The Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences (MHLS) is led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Prof Aaron Maule.

- o School of Biological Sciences
- o School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences
  This is a very big School, so it is further divided into three research centres, the Wellcome-Wolfson Institute for Experimental Medicine, the Patrick G. Johnston Centre for Cancer Research and the Centre for Public Health, as well as three teaching centres for Biomedical Sciences, Dentistry and Medical Sciences
- o School of Nursing and Midwifery
- o School of Pharmacy

## Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS)

The Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS) is led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Prof Chris Johnson.

- o School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering
- o School of Electronics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science
- o School of Mathematics and Physics
- o School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering
- o School of Natural and Built Environment
- o School of Psychology

## Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS)

The Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) is led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Prof Nola Hewitt-Dundas

- o School of Arts, English and Languages
- o School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics
- o School of Law
- o School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work
- o Queen's Management School

Research around themes common to several schools are regrouped in Global Research Institutes, the Institute for Global Food Security (IGFS), the Senator George J. Mitchell

[Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice](#), the [Institute of Electronics, Communications and Information Technology (ECIT)](#) and the [Institute for Health Sciences (IHS)](#).

## Research at Queen's

Research at Queen's addresses a wide range of local and global challenges grouped in five big themes:

- Healthy living for all
- A transformative and sustainable economy
- Secure connected intelligence – AI and the data revolution
- Human-environment relations
- Inclusive and cohesive communities

Queen's is committed to delivering high quality research with the potential to impact the



world and solve some of our biggest challenges, aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

We have a strong focus on the impact of our research, and encourage innovation and commercialisation, public engagement and collaboration across sectors and internationally.

A positive, inclusive and nurturing research culture is at the core of the university's research strategy, with the objective of providing a supportive environment for research staff at all levels and in all kinds of roles. This notably involves providing bespoke support departments for specific categories of researchers, such as the Graduate School for postgraduate researchers, the Postdoctoral Development Centre (PDC) for postdocs and researchers and the Fellowship Academy for fellowship holders.

Find more information on Queen's research, strategy, impact, case studies, culture and environment on the [Research website](#).

## University awards and commitments

Queen's is a signatory of a range of initiatives promoting a positive environment for staff and received awards and recognition for its work. The most specific to researchers is the

Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, but other frameworks also apply to different staff groups.

## The Researcher Development Concordat

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (known as "Researcher Development Concordat") is an agreement to improve the career development of researchers in the UK.

It sets key expectations from signatory institutions (universities, including Queen's), research funders, researchers (that's you!) and their managers. By signing up, Queen's commits to develop, publish, implement and regularly review a specific Action Plan aiming at providing high quality experience to research staff in the areas of Environment and culture, Employment and Professional and career development.

As a researcher at Queen's, you are expected to behave according to the principles listed in the Concordat, notably by actively engaging with your own career development.

For its implementation of the Concordat, Queen's holds the HR Excellence in Research Award.

Find more information on the Researcher Development Concordat, your obligations as a researchers and Queen's action plan on the [PDC's Researcher Development Concordat page](#).

## Other awards and frameworks

Queen's university received numerous awards highlighting its engagement in staff career development, wellbeing and fair treatment. Queen's University Belfast was awarded the Investors In People Silver award, which recognises the best workplaces as well as the Family Friendly Employer award and the CIPD Northern Ireland award for its work in promoting health and wellbeing. The university is also committed to promoting opportunities and accessibility for people with disabilities and is a member of Employers for Disability Northern Ireland. For its commitment to Gender Equality, Queen's University currently holds an [Athena Swan Silver award](#). The University also currently holds 14 School awards comprising 3 Gold, 6 Silver and 5 Bronze. The University signed up to the Advance HE [Race Equality Charter (REC)](#) in 2020 which provides a framework to identify and critically reflect on institutional and cultural barriers standing in the way of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff and students.

## QUB campus

The University departments and most of the schools and research facilities are located in the main campus, around University Road, Chlorine Gardens, the Belfast City Hospital and Stranmillis Road.

A few research facilities are however located further away and are not represented on the map next page. These notably include the Centre for Public Health, located on the Royal Victoria Hospital site, the Marine Laboratory, located in Portaferry, and the Institute of Electronics, Communications and Information Technology, located in the Titanic Quarter.

# CAMPUS MAP
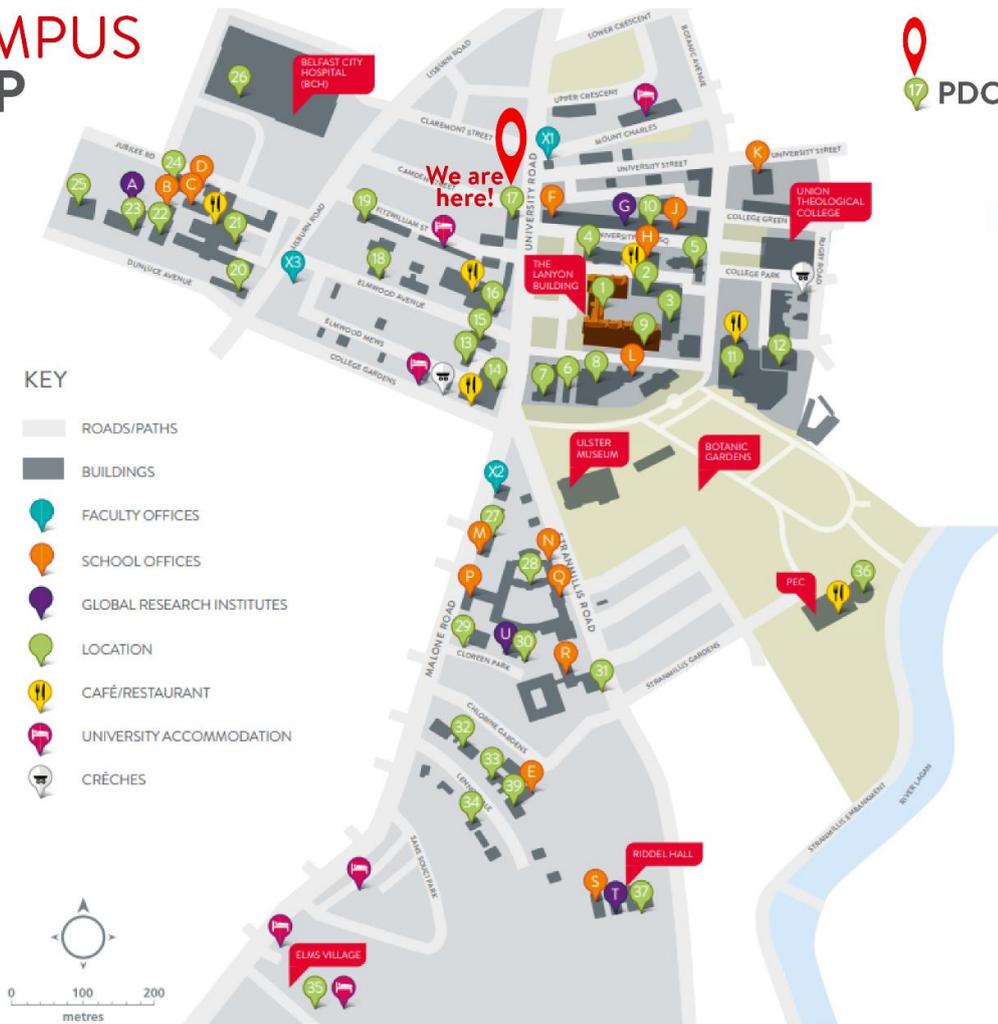
## KEY

- ROADS/PATHS
- BUILDINGS
- FACULTY OFFICES
- SCHOOL OFFICES
- GLOBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTES
- LOCATION
- CAFÉ/RESTAURANT
- UNIVERSITY ACCOMMODATION
- CRÈCHES

**FACULTY OFFICES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences | X1 |
| Engineering and Physical Sciences | X2 |
| Medicine, Health and Life Sciences | X3 |

**SCHOOL OFFICES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Arts, English and Languages | F |
| Biological Sciences | E |
| Chemistry and Chemical Engineering | N |
| Electronics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science | M |
| History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics | J |
| Law | H |
| Mathematics and Physics | L |
| Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering | R |
| Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences | B |
| Natural and Built Environment | Q |
| Nursing and Midwifery | C |
| Pharmacy | D |
| Psychology | P |
| Queen's Management School | S |
| Social Sciences, Education and Social Work | K |

**GLOBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTES**

| | |
|---|---|
| The Senator George J Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice | G |
| The William J Clinton Leadership Institute | T |
| The Institute for Global Food Security | U |
| The Institute of Electronics, Communications and Information Technology (Titanic Quarter) | |
| The Institute of Health Sciences | A |

**LOCATION**

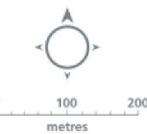| | |
|---|---|
| Academic and Student Affairs | 3 |
| Administration Building | 3 |
| Ashby Building | 31 |
| Biological Sciences | 39 |
| Canada Room/Council Chamber | 1 |
| Careers, Employability and Skills | 14 |
| Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology (CCRCB) | 23 |
| Chrono Centre | 19 |
| Clinical Research Facility | 26 |
| Computer Science | 27 |
| Counselling Service | 14 |
| David Bates Building | 12 |
| David Keir Building | 28 |
| Development and Alumni Relations | 1 |
| Disability Services | 14 |
| Drama and Film Centre at Queen's | 10 |
| Dunluce Health Centre | 20 |
| Elms Village | 35 |
| Elmwood Building | 18 |
| Elmwood Hall | 15 |
| Estates | 3 |
| Finance | 3 |
| Graduate School | 4 |
| Great Hall | 1 |
| Harty Room | 5 |
| Health Sciences Building | 25 |
| Human Resources | 3 |
| Information Services | 11 |
| Institute of Professional Legal Studies (IPLS) | 33 |
| International Office | 1 |
| INTO Queen's | 32 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Jobshop | 14 |
| Lanyon Building | 1 |
| Main Site Tower | 2 |
| Marketing, Recruitment, Communications and Internationalisation | 1 |
| McClay Research Centre | 24 |
| Medical Biology Centre (MBC | 21 |
| Naughton Gallery at Queen's | 1 |
| New Physics Building | 8 |
| Northern Ireland Technology Centre (NITC) | 30 |
| Occupational Health and Safety Services | 34 |
| Old Physics Building | 9 |
| Peter Froggatt Centre (PFC) | 2 |
| Pharmacy Building | 24 |
| Physical Education Centre (PEC) | 36 |
| Queen's Film Theatre (QFT) | 10 |
| Registrar and Chief Operating Officer | 1 |
| Research and Enterprise | 17 |
| Riddel Hall | 37 |
| Sonic Arts Research Centre (SARC) | 29 |
| South Dining Hall | 6 |
| Student Guidance Centre | 14 |
| Student Plus | 1 |
| Students' Union | 16 |
| The McClay Library | 11 |
| University Health Centre | 13 |
| Vice-Chancellor's Office | 1 |
| Welcome Centre | 1 |
| Whitla Hall | 7 |
| Whitla Medical Building | 22 |
| Wellcome-Wolfson Institute for Experimental Medicine | 23 |

[View this map online](#)

# Relevant university support departments

## Postdoctoral Development Centre (PDC)

The PDC co-ordinates resources and programmes designed to support the career development and experience of postdoctoral researchers at Queen's, including advertising relevant provision from other departments listed in this document. It is the first point of contact for postdoc and researchers' queries, especially related to development, but the PDC staff will direct you to any other services as appropriate. The PDC is your centre and will be described in more details in a dedicated section of this booklet. More information is also available on the PDC website.

The PDC can be contacted via email to pdc@qub.ac.uk.

## People and Culture (P&C)

The PC department (previously "Human Resources") provides assistance with recruitment, terms and conditions of employment, discipline and grievance, absence and performance. They can help with all human resources-related questions and are the first point of contact for international staff.

General queries should be directed to the HR Hub and more specific matters the relevant HR Business Partner.

Contacts for HR business Partners (P&C intranet)

## Organisational Development (OD)

Organisational Development is a sub-division of the People and Culture Directorate that provides training courses and resources to staff, including research staff. Some of those resources are advertised through the PDC catalogue and OD and the PDC collaborate on a range of projects, including the Researcher Development Concordat or the Postdoc Group Mentoring Scheme.

More information on Learning and Development, OD

Contact: stafflearning@qub.ac.uk | careers@qub.ac.uk

## Research and Enterprise (R&E)



The Research and Enterprise directorate is involved in defining the university's research strategy and policies as well as supporting researchers with regards to grant applications (Research Development team), business engagement (Business Alliance, Consultancy and Knowledge Transfer Partnership teams), commercialisation (Intellectual Property, Spinouts etc.), impact and public engagement (Research Policy Office), research information (Pure system) and integrity and ethics (Governance team). View the R&E website for more information.

## Information services and The McClay Library



Information services provides a wide range of computing services and can assist with email, network, online storage space, IT-related training courses and poster printing. A language centre is also available on the same premises. The library offers a wide range of resources and specialist librarians are here to help you find what you need. It also provides advice on open access and licensing regarding research publications.

 Contact: For help with IT, contact your School/Building IT Officer, the IT service desk on the ground floor of the McClay Library (advisory@qub.ac.uk) or use the Request IT Support system.

More information on the library | Information on Open Access, pure and ORCID | Instructions for printing posters | More information on the language centre

## Centre for Educational Development (CED)

The CED support staff involved in teaching by providing teaching training, co-ordinating teaching certifications (via the Higher Education Academy Fellowship scheme) and organising teaching conferences and seminars. You can find more information on the CED and its resources on the CED website and by signing up for the CED Newsletter. Information regarding teaching for postdocs can be found on the related PDC webpage.

## Core Technology Units (CTUs)
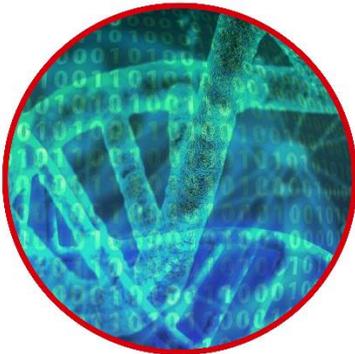


**Genomics CTU**          **Advanced Imaging CTU**          **Biological Services Unit**

The Faculty of MHLS provides access to state-of-the-art scientific equipment and expertise through its CTUs in the field's genomics (notably Next Generation Sequencing), advanced imaging (microscopes, image analysis software...) and the Biological Services Unit (animal research facility). While these facilities are based in the MHLS faculty, they are open to all.

More details on the CTUs

## Occupational Health



Occupational Health offers services for the prevention of work-related injury or ill-health. It provides pre-employment health screening, health surveillance and immunisations based on the work you are carrying out.

Contact: occhealth@qub.ac.uk | 028 9097 5541

## Networks and Inclusivity

Queen's is committed to providing a working environment and culture that is welcoming to all, by developing appropriate Diversity and Inclusion policies and providing support and reporting opportunities to specific groups through dedicated networks. These include the Queen's Gender Initiative, focusing on gender

equality, iRise, addressing the challenges of international and BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) staff, and PRISM, Queen's LGBT+ staff network (LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans).

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team in People and Culture also supports staff with disabilities. If you have a disability, you should declare it to enable appropriate recording and discuss any necessary adjustments. Queen's has a Staff Disability Support Fund, which can notably contribute to the purchase of various pieces of office equipment such as larger monitors, specialist chairs etc. as well as a Staff Disability Support Network which allows those with a disability across the university to come together to chat and share ideas and experiences. More information on the Staff Disability Page or contact eqdiv@qub.ac.uk. Accessibility information of Queen's facilities can be found on AccessAble.

# Human Resources for postdocs

## Recruitment process

The recruitment and selection process at QUB has been established to ensure the appointment of the highest calibre of staff based on merit and the promotion of equality and diversity. The university is committed to providing equality of opportunity to all applicants.

More information on the recruitment process in the Recruitment and Selection Procedure.

## Contract length and opening hours

Most postdocs are funded by grants awarded to their PI for a definite amount of time, usually between 1 and 5 years. The length of the contract is directly defined by the funding available and, in most cases, cannot be extended beyond the original end date. The extension of a fixed-term contract is subject to additional funding being made available for the position by the PI.

Terms and Conditions for full-time contracts of research staff at grades AC1 and above (including, Research Assistants, Research Fellows etc.) state working hours of 37 per week, together with such additional hours as are required to complete and fulfil their duties, which in general is between 37 and 40 hours per week. Core opening hours usually operate between 7 am and 7 pm Monday to Friday. Due to the nature of the research work, you may sometimes work outside of core hours and on weekends and bank holidays. Be aware that specific health and safety procedures for lone working need to be followed in this case, including obtaining written consent from your PI, signing a login book, and calling security (028 9097 5099). Please talk to your PI and centre/school manager for more details.

## Flexible and agile working



As all other staff at Queen's, postdocs and researchers are eligible to request flexible or agile working arrangements. Depending on specific situations, funding, team composition, type of work etc., it may not always be possible to accommodate every request. Both types require approval from your line manager/PI.

Flexible working relates to specific patterns that are included in your contract, such as working part-time. They are fixed patterns and can't change without another official request and approval process. They are for long-term arrangements.

Agile working was introduced at Queen's in 2021 and is still in a pilot period. It relates to short-term agreements with your PI, Team and School/Centre to enable you to adapt your working patterns to your workload, type of work and life commitments more flexibly. While this policy is new, similar practices were often the case in research because of the nature of the job. This includes for example having flexible start and finish hours around core working hours (e.g., 10 am – 4 pm), working less a week when you have worked more than usual another week or hybrid working (partly on campus, partly from home. Individual teams will have their own standards of what is reasonable and expected. Note that there is no requirement for the university to provide additional equipment for you to work from home and that such arrangements may be granted at some times but not at others, depending on your team's needs.

More information on flexible and agile working (P&C intranet)

## Probation

The main function of the probation is to enable time for the newly appointed postdoc to gain sufficient knowledge and demonstrate their ability to carry out the work they have been hired to do.

During your probation period, usually 6 months, your PI should explicitly set your objectives and provide feedback on performance. Documentation relevant to the probation is then

filled out by both of you at the end of the probation period and will lead to the confirmation or not of your appointment.

More information on the probation procedure

## Salary

Postdocs are hired on the AC2 (most postdocs) or AC3 (senior postdocs and most independent fellows) scales based on the job description, reflecting their level of responsibility. Other research positions may align to other grades (e.g., Research Assistant at AC1 scale). The pre-tax salary within a given grade is adapted from the Academic (AC) Salary Scales depending on available funds and experience.

More information on Pay and Conditions, including Academic (AC) Salary Scales

Your salary is usually paid into your bank account on the last banking day of the month.

Your payslips are available to download from the iTrent Self Service System.

## Tax

In the UK, income tax and national insurance is collected directly from peoples' salaries before the money is deposited into their bank account. This is known as PAYE (Pay As You Earn) and if your employment at QUB is your only source of income, you would not normally pay additional tax on your work income. Please note, however, that it is the responsibility of each individual to pay the appropriate taxes and therefore if there has been any complexity with your income during the tax year (which starts on 6 April each year) you should seek specialist advice. Estimate your income after tax.

Every year, the university will provide you with a P60 form, which summarises your total pay and deductions for the previous tax year. This form can be downloaded from iTrent and needs to be kept.

## Leave

### Annual leave and holidays

Postdocs, as any other member of staff, are entitled to 23 days of annual leave per year (pro-rata for partial years or part-time employment).

These days are to be taken in addition to 9 fixed bank holidays (New Year's Day, Saint-Patrick's day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, May Day, July 12 and 13, Christmas Day and Boxing Day) and 10 university closure day (5 each at Easter and Christmas).

[Details for the current year](#)

Each period of leave should be discussed and accepted by the PI of the postdoc and recorded, for example using the [PDC's leave recording form template](#).

It is important to note that you will not be paid extra money for not taking all your annual leave (except if you are leaving your employment; within the acceptable accrued amount). You can, however, normally carry over 5 days of leave from one year to the next.

[More information on leave](#)

### Sick leave

If you are sick and cannot work, you need to let your PI know as soon as possible. When returning to work, you should complete a Sickness Absence Form. If the absence was longer than 7 consecutive days, you will have to provide a medical certificate.

The form and more information can be found on the [Sickness Absence Toolkit](#) webpage.

## Family



Postdocs are entitled to maternity, paternity, parental, and adoptive leave.

Please note that if you are pregnant and carrying out lab work, you will need to conduct a risk assessment with the health and safety (H&S) officer in your school/centre to assure your safety and that of your baby (ask your school/centre manager or H&S team for more information).

[More information on family leave](#)

The university offers a salary sacrifice scheme to pay for childcare in one of QUB's crèches or to pay for childcare vouchers to use with your provider. More information is available on the [Work Life Balance Policies page](#) and the [Childcare at Queen's](#) pages.

## Training and career development

The university complies with the Concordat to support the career development of researchers and offers resources and programmes through various departments, including the PDC (see [PDC section](#)). While the university is bound to offer this support to you, you are in charge of your own career development.

As a postdoc at Queen's, **you are entitled to up to 10 days per year to use as you wish for your career development**. These days can be used, for example: to attend courses, workshops and events organised by the PDC or other departments, get involved with committees, obtain preliminary data for a fellowship application, build a collaboration with industry, carry out a short placement, attend an interview, shadow a professional in a different role/sector… They should not be used to carry out your "normal work" and work-related training requested by your PI (e.g., training on a technique required for carrying your research project). [Relevant information on the 10 career development days policy](#).

As for leave, the use of training days should be recorded, for example on the training recording form ([Download form](#)) and you must notify your PI. The training recording form will also be useful when filling up your PDR, Individual Development Plan and when updating your CV.

## Personal Development Review (PDR)

The aim of the PDR is to review your progress and development, in order to help you reach your potential in your role and develop your career. It is focused around a yearly review meeting with your PI to discuss your career goals and short and long-term aspirations, identify training needs, and devise a plan on how to work towards those goals. Since the postdoctoral position is a transitory development position, the career development aspect

of the PDR should not be neglected. The PDR is not meant to be used to plan your research, but to reflect on your personal career goals and development.

The PDR is compulsory for all staff members and for postdocs is usually carried out by the PI once a year. The postdoc's PDR requires the completion of a PDR form by both the postdoc and the PI, some of the information being discussed during an appraisal meeting. The final agreed document must be signed by both parties and transferred to the centre or school manager.

Information on the PDR and forms – Postdocs should use the Research and Professional Services PDR Form.

## Perks

As staff, you have access to numerous events and programmes (travel loan, cycle to work, car parking, childcare…), reduced prices to access QUB facilities (QUB sport, Queen's Film Theatre…) and discounts at hundreds of high street retailers via the Enderel's MyLifestyleHub.

More information on employee discounts | MyLifestyleHub offers

## Leaving your postdoc

Postdoc positions (and some other types of research positions) are based on the needs of a specific funded research project, with defined end date and budget, and as such are fixed-term contracts. This means that your contract will end and that, whatever your situation, you will need to apply and secure another position at some point, in or out of the university.

If no funding has been secured to extend your position, you will receive an email 6 months before your contract end date from P&C, indicating that your appointment may be terminated.

There are however several ways to secure further employment in the university, as indicated below.

You can also find complementary information and links to finding employment at Queen's on the PDC's Prospective postdoc page.

### Contract extension

Your contract may be extended if more funding becomes available and your role is still needed. This often is the case when a PI secures a new grant that includes funding for a postdoc, with a project that fits your expertise. When writing grants, PIs generally have the opportunity to name the researcher who would do the work on funding applications. In this case, the named researcher (you) wouldn't need to apply and interview for the post if the grant was awarded.

## Funding application

You can develop a funding application to secure your own employment. This can for example be a fellowship, which are career development awards designed to help early career researchers progress their academic career and pursue their own independent research ideas. You could also design a grant proposal alongside an academic (who would be the PI), with yourself as named researcher as described above. Applying for funding takes time and planning.

## Application to internal and external vacancies

There is a range of positions advertised at Queen's, including academic positions (teaching or teaching and research), postdoc positions, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (positions at the interface of academia and industry), teaching positions, research support and other administrative roles.

Internal vacancies are advertised on the internal vacancies page from Queen's Online and some are also highlighted in the weekly Staff Round Up. All other positions are advertised externally on the career opportunities page.

These roles are competitively allocated and require you to apply and interview.

## Redeployment

From 6 months before your contract end date, you will be added to the redeployment register. The aim of the register is to support staff facing redundancy to find suitable alternative employment in the University. As a redeployee, you will have access to vacancies before they are advertised internally or externally, through the redeployment portal on (QOL: Services / Administration / Redeployment portal). You will receive emails every week with current vacancies, however, you should check the portal regularly as vacancies may be added any day and are normally live for up to five days.

The redeployment portal only allows you to apply for positions of similar or lower grade to yours and that are considered relevant in terms of expertise. This may include research roles and some research support positions in Research and Enterprise. This is because it is a simpler application process for which suitable candidates do not have to undergo a classic interview but are invited to discuss their suitability with the line manager. For positions higher than your grade or in a different area, you need to apply to internal and external vacancies and go through a full recruitment exercise.

It is important to note that there may be circumstances when postdocs are not eligible to be considered for redeployment, e.g., those requiring certificates of sponsorship for a visa to work in the UK. They can however apply for advertised vacancies.

We advise you not to rely solely on the redeployment system as research roles tend to be very specific and positions that fit your profile may be rare.

More information on redeployment

Redundancy

If alternative employment in the university has not been secured by the end of your fixed-term contract, you may be entitled to a redundancy payment. Eligibility for a redundancy payment is set out in the Redundancy Procedure. Please contact P&C for more information on redundancy payments.

Resignation

If you wish to resign from your postdoc position, you need to provide a letter of resignation accompanied by a completed resignation form (download the form) 3 months before leaving.

# Pension

Postdocs are automatically enrolled in the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS). Contributions to the pension fund is automatically collected from your salary and are complemented by a contribution from the university. This fund builds up over the years to provide an income after retirement.

When you leave the University, you can either leave the fund within USS and claim your benefits at retirement or investigate to transfer to a new pension provider. A transfer is possible to most UK pension schemes, and some oversees arrangements exist (more details on pension when leaving).

When leaving (and when you move later in your life), make sure you provide your new address to the Pension team as your retirement information will be sent by post.

For more information on your USS pension fund, visit the USS website or contact the pension helpdesk (pensionshelpdesk@qub.ac.uk | 028 9097 3023).

# International staff

The UK Government has created specific pages to provide information to people willing to come to the UK to work in science, research, technology, and engineering. It includes practical guides, information on the UK funding landscape, a Visa exploration tool, and the possibility to sign-up to receive more information.

UK guide to working, living and moving to the UK.

## Visa

Postdocs from the Republic of Ireland do not need a visa to work in Northern Ireland.

Postdocs from other countries who do not have a residency permit or settled status (including from the European Union or Switzerland since Brexit) do need a visa to work in the UK.

There are multiple types of visas that can apply depending on your situation, including the Skilled worker visa and the Government authorised exchange visa or Global talent visa. The university can, if required, provide you with a certificate of sponsorship to use in your application. The People and Culture Business Partner (PCBP) in charge of your appointment will provide you with additional information relevant to your specific situation and put you in contact with the international staff team if needed. In some cases, the cost of the visa application can be claimed back as part of the relocation scheme (see relocation section below). If you already have a UK work visa, you will be required to provide original proof of this before taking up your post. You may need to apply for a new visa even if you currently have one, so contact your PCBP before resigning from your previous employment.

More information on visas at Queen's | Visa information on the UK government website

## Police registration

Your entry clearance may state that you need to register with the police. In this case, you need to register within 7 days of arrival by requesting an appointment with Constable Fiona James (FIONA.JAMES@psni.pnn.police.uk or 028 9097 0222 extension 22168). You will notably have to provide your passport, 2 passport photographs, your confirmation of employment letter and pay a fee (≈£34).

## Relocation

If moving from outside Northern Ireland, you may be entitled to assistance with your relocation expenses, which will be set out in your offer letter.



Eligible expenses and the procedure for claiming reimbursement are included in the Relocation Policy. Expenses that can be claimed include removal, plane fare, hotel nights and visa. Relocation payment will only be made for reasonable eligible costs and upon receipt of a completed form and receipts. Payments are processed in line with monthly salary. The maximum amount that can be claimed is defined as one month's basic annual starting salary for those with contracts of up to 3 years. Those with contracts of 3 years or more will be entitled to 20 % of their basic annual starting salary, with an additional £ 1,000 for all employees relocating from outside the EU.

Note that if you leave your employment early, you may be required to repay some or all of any relocation benefit received.

## Accommodation

Queen's Accommodation department manages apartments and houses available to rent for periods up to 12 months to help new staff settling in Belfast. These properties are subject to availability, and you need to contact the department (staffaccommodation@qub.ac.uk) as soon as possible. More information on QUB accommodation.

Apartments and rooms in shared properties for rent can be found in websites such as Property Pal and Propertynews. Staff in the Queen's accommodation and hospitality department can also help you with finding a place to stay.

## Bank account

It can be difficult for international postdocs to open a bank account due to the absence of credit records in the country. It is recommended to make an appointment with the bank of your choice in advance and enquire which documents you need to provide to open an account (usually a passport or other photographic ID document, a proof of address in the UK like a tenancy agreement or a bill, a proof of employment like your letter of appointment).

The main banks in the university area are Ulster Bank, Santander, Danske Bank and First Trust. Other banks include HSBC and Barclays in the city centre.

## National Insurance number

You are required to have a National Insurance number to work in the UK. Once you have arrived in QUB, call the Social Security Agency (0345 600 0643) to get an appointment. At this appointment you will need to bring as many proof of identity documents as you can (passport, national identity card, driving license, residence permit, birth certificate, marriage license…) and you will be asked to answer questions including when you arrived in the country, where you stayed etc. You will need an address since your number will be sent to you by post.

Once you receive the letter containing your National Insurance number, notify People and Culture and Salaries and keep the letter.

More information on how to apply for a NI number

## Registering with a doctor (General Practitioner = GP)

You should register with a local health centre so that you can get an appointment with a doctor (GP) when you are sick. You can find local healthcare providers using this service finder tool. Your GP can treat most illnesses and refer you to a specialist if needed. A similar process applies for dentists.

For serious emergencies you will need to go to Accident and Emergency (A&E) at the nearest hospital. To call for an ambulance, dial 999.

When you work in the UK and have a National Insurance Number, you will be able to benefit from free healthcare and prescription drugs by the National Health Service (NHS).

## Getting a mobile phone

Due to a lack of credit history in the UK, international postdocs may find it challenging to get a mobile phone contract, especially those including smartphones. You should, however, easily be able to get a "pay as you go" basic phone or a "sim only" contract giving you access to a sim card that you can insert in a phone bought separately (like your current phone if compatible). Main phone providers are Virgin mobile, EE, Three, O2, BT mobile and Tesco mobile and have shops around Belfast city centre.

## Driving

If you have a driving licence from another country, you can usually drive a car with it for a maximum of 12 months after becoming resident, then you need to get a provisional Northern Irish licence and pass a test.

More information on foreign driving licences in NI

Using a car requires the car to be registered, insured, have a valid MOT (Ministry of Transport test) and the car tax paid. More information on this can be found on the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Northern Ireland (DVLNI) website.

Before driving, you need to familiarise yourself with the NI driving rules.

## Voting

Citizens from the European Union or Commonwealth countries can register to be able to vote in Northern Ireland. They are usually able to vote for local and European elections, NI assembly elections and some referendums (but not for parliamentary general elections).

Of note, registering to vote helps to improve your credit score, which is used to assess your eligibility to access some credit cards, loans or mortgages.

More information on who can vote, for which elections and the registration procedure can be found through the Electoral Office.

## Special international staff programmes

Specific information is available for international staff and Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff via the QUB iRise website.

**English language support:** The in-sessional team at INTO provides English and Academic Skills courses, which are specifically designed to help support students and staff who do not have English as a first language. All classes are

taught by experienced English for Academic Purposes teachers and are completely free. INTO website | Contact: insessionalinto@qub.ac.uk.

# Getting started as a postdoc

## Staff inductions

**PDC Postdoc induction:** The Postdoctoral Development Centre provides a 2.5 h induction session open to all new postdocs and research staff. This induction contains information designed to help you understand your environment, define your role as a postdoc and associated expectations, but it mostly focuses on the support available at Queen's to help you in your role and career development. Part of the session will be dedicated to discussing career planning and help you identify a few things you want to achieve during your postdoc so that you make the best out of your time at Queen's. These interactive sessions will also enable you to meet other postdocs. The PDC inductions are organised every 2 or 3 months and, while they focus more specifically on the role of postdoctoral researchers, most of the content is applicable to many other research positions, and all research staff are welcome.

Information on the session and registration link.

**All staff welcome event:** People and Culture organise a welcome event for all staff a few times a year. The format is that of a fair (on campus and online), with stands that you can visit as you wish depending on what you are interested in. It features many areas providing support and information in the University, including P&C ("HR"), the International Staff Network (iRise), Queen's Sport, IT, Staff Wellbeing, Pensions, the LGBT+ staff network (PRISM), and the PDC!

More information on the all staff welcome event (dates and content).

You will also receive more specific information relevant to your school or centre locally. Some Schools, Centres and Faculties have specific postdoc buddy/welcoming schemes organised by local postdoc representatives.

## New postdoc checklist

The PDC has designed a checklist of actions you need to take before moving to Belfast before your start date and during your first weeks of employment, to facilitate your transition to your new postdoc position. (Find your checklist in appendix).

## How to obtain a staff card and code

Each staff member is issued a staff card with photograph. You need to always carry this with you as it is proof of your belonging to the university and authorisation to be on the premises. Your staff card will be required to access some facilities like laboratories, offices, restricted areas, and the library.

An appointment should have been made for you to obtain a staff card in your first few days with QUB. You will get your card at the P&C directorate in the Administration Building.

You can also be issued a personal code to use on keypads to enter some facilities, sometimes in addition to your smartcard. Please note that you should never give this code to anyone. To request your code, talk to your School or Centre manager.

## How to use QOL and iTrent

Queen's Online (QOL) is the online staff platform on which you can access number of services like your email, employment details, online training etc.

You are required to login using your staff number and password.

QOL holds a link for Office 365. This is a suite of online programmes that you have access to for free, including Microsoft Word, Excel, Outlook, Teams and SharePoint. You are advised to personalise your Office 365 profile, notably by adding a picture for your colleagues to be able to identify you.

From QOL, you can access iTrent, a platform in which you can find some of your personal information, employment details, payslips, P60 form as well as the Self Service system to book and cancel training courses. For example, you can access iTrent by clicking on "Training Courses" in the "Other" section via "Services" in QOL. You will again be asked to login with your staff number and password.

It is important at the start of your employment that you add your ICE (In Case of Emergency) contacts and verify that your personal information, like your address and phone number, is correct (in iTrent).

## Staff email

Each postdoc is automatically issued with a university email address in the form n.surname@qub.ac.uk with a password.

Your emails can be accessed through QOL (or directly on the (QUB Email page) by logging in with your staff number and password and/or using Outlook on your computer or mobile device. More information on the 'Email and calendars' page.

It is highly recommended that you set up an automatic email signature with your job title, work address and contact details as well as setting up automatic out of office notifications when you are on leave or away with limited email access (see general emails procedures). Your signature should ideally use the recommended format with the QUB logo (see Procedure for branded signature) and can be customised with your working pattern (especially if part-time), an environment friendly message, links to your social media, pronouns you identify with (He/Him, She/Her, They/Them) to signify support for our transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse colleagues, etc.

Be aware that once your contract expires, your staff email account will be deleted. Please ensure that you provide another email address to colleagues you want to keep in touch with as well as on your CV or job applications.

If you want to send large files you can use the QUB Dropoff service.

## Access to facilities

You will have to contact your School or Centre manager to be granted access to the facilities you need to use. Your PI should advise which ones will be relevant to your work.

## Transport



### Buses and trains

Belfast city buses (Metro) serve the main university site through the lines 7, 8 and 9. The bus services from outside Belfast are provided by Ulsterbus and Goldline. The trains are provided by NI Railway and the closest train stations from the main QUB site are City Hospital (Donegall Road) and Botanic (Botanic Avenue).

All buses and train timetables are available on the Translink website.

QUB offers to save you money when buying an annual Translink transport card by offering an interest-free loan, which is then repaid monthly directly from your salary.

More information on the scheme.

A free shuttle bus operating between the Belfast City Hospital and the Royal Victoria Hospital can be accessed upon presentation of your staff card (more information and timetable). During term time, the limited stop Metro U2 Uni-Link runs from QUB to Ulster University campuses.

### Car park

The university issues car parking permits for several areas around the campus. These are subject to a fee, are available in limited numbers and there are long waiting lists. To inquire about a parking space, you can email permits@qub.ac.uk or register for the waiting list through QOL.

### Cycling

The university provides safe locked bicycles parking facilities, pumps and cyclist changing facilities (with showers) throughout the campus.

In addition to those facilities, members of staff can benefit from an interest-free loan to buy a bicycle or equipment as well as from the

Cyclescheme, which facilitates the acquisition of a bicycle and safety equipment at a lesser cost.

The University partners with Big Loop Bikes, a social enterprise, to provide a Bike Hub. The Bike Hub sells refurbished bikes and offers bike leasing and a range of servicing options. Book an appointment at the Bike Hub through Eventbrite

You can also rent a "Belfast bike" as you go and there are several docking stations near the university, Botanic Gardens, hospitals etc. (See locations)

For more information, visit the Estates website or contact transport@qub.ac.uk.

## Setting up your computer workstation

As part of the mandatory courses to complete on QOL (see next section), the "Health and Safety for Computer Users" course provides tips to set your computer, chair etc. correctly and avoid computer-related injuries.

### Set up your computer

To set up a new computer or register as an administrator on an existing QUB computer, you will need to contact your local IT officer (listed in the support departments section above).

### Software

The IT officer will be able to help you configure Outlook as well as install software you need (ask your PI which ones you are likely to require access to), for example the ones on this software list.

### Printing, copying, and scanning

These actions can be done for free for staff by using the common multifunction devices placed in different departments of the university. Those devices are listed as Staff Mono or Staff Colour in the printer list of computers connected to the network via an Ethernet cable. The documents in your queue are kept for 3h and can be printed from any university multifunction device using your smartcard.

You can also print from a Wi-Fi-connected laptop using this address.

### Get Wi-Fi and email on your mobile devices

Follow the instructions to connect a mobile device to the Wi-Fi and to set up the collection of your email on your mobile device.

## Staff compulsory online training

You need to complete a number of mandatory online courses and we advise you to do so on your first week. These courses appear under the courses & requirements section on QOL and, once completed, will be given a "green light" (see QOL section). Just click on the relevant course to get instructions on how to take it. You need a green light for all of them. Some courses need to be retaken annually e.g. Annual fire safety.

## Set up your Pure profile

Your pure profile regroups information about your research and is also the page that people who google your name and QUB will be redirected to. It is important that you check that your contact details are correct and update them if needed as well as add a picture to your profile. The papers you publish at QUB should be added to pure (in general by your PI; they then automatically appear on your profile).

Just login with your staff number and password on the pure portal (also accessible via QOL/Research).

# Wellbeing

## Staff Wellbeing department

The QUB staff wellbeing department organises events and co-ordinates resources relevant to healthy lifestyle, stress management and positive work relationships. More information on the current events is available on the Wellbeing at Queen's website.

## Free 24/7 counselling

Too much stress? Issues with your work? Problems in your personal life? Queen's University provides you with access to a free and confidential professional counselling service. This service is provided by Inspire (Inspire website) by telephone and/or face to face, at any time (24 h a day and 7 days a week). To access counselling, call 0800 389 5362 for free.

## Queen's Sport

Queen's Sport is located in the Physical Education Centre (PEC) at the bottom of the Botanic Gardens and offers numerous fitness facilities, classes, coaching etc. See the full list of activities and information on memberships (discounted for staff).

## Queen's Film Theatre (QFT)

QFT is a lovely independent cinema located on University Road. It offers a discounted ticket price to all university staff members upon presentation of a staff card. See the programme and online booking platform.

## Tourism

Northern Ireland offers a variety of opportunities for tourism including the stunning landscapes of the Giant's Causeway coastal route. It is also the home of the Titanic, one of the main filming sites of the series Game of Thrones® and owns some of the best UK restaurants. Whether your hobby is hiking, going to museums or eating good food, there's always going to be something for you to do in Northern Ireland! Touristic information is available on the Discover Northern Ireland website.



# Postdoctoral Development Centre (PDC) and relevant support

## What is the PDC?

The PDC was launched in October 2021 (after a 3.5-year pilot in the MHLS Faculty) to support all postdoctoral researchers at Queen's. It aims at promoting a positive postdoc experience and empowering researchers to progress their career beyond their postdoc position.

Career progression means different things to different people, and whether you are looking to develop new skills and experience, take on another similar position, move to a different role, a different sector or set up your own business, the PDC is here to help!

This is principally achieved by providing appropriate information and bespoke resources, as well as promoting a supportive environment and culture.

The PDC's support can be classified in six main categories: Information, Development, Career, Policy, Representation and Recognition.

Information          Career          Representation

Development          Policy          Recognition

## Resources
Providing bespoke workshops, events etc.

## Culture
Promoting a supportive environment

While the PDC is driven by the needs of postdoctoral researchers, it is open to all research staff in the university.

More about the PDC's mission, audience, staff and contacts on the About the PDC page.

## Information

Being aware and well-informed is essential for researchers to develop, not miss opportunities and succeed.

The PDC is postdocs' first point-of-contact, answering queries and directing individuals towards appropriate people and resources.

It keeps an eye on information and opportunities that are relevant to the postdoctoral career stage, collates it and disseminates it through various media, including the PDC website, regular "updates" emails and Twitter account (@QUBpostdoc).

It is worth noting that most university departments have their own communications (including newsletters and social media) and that you should follow the topics you are interested in (Examples on the News page).

Individuals employed as Research staff (including Research Fellows, Research Assistants and KTP Associates) automatically receive information from the PDC. Other interested individuals can email the PDC to sign-up.

The PDC also provides induction sessions to welcome new starts (in addition to this booklet!), helping them understand their surroundings, their role, the support available to them and set goals to make the best of their postdoc contract. Local programmes at Centre,

School or Faculty level are also organised to enable new postdocs to settle in (please contact your local representatives for information).

Many events and seminars are organised at Queen's throughout the year, on a range of topics. Some of them are advertised on What's on at Queen's or in the Staff Round Up, which all staff receive by email once a week.

# Development

Postdoc and research assistant positions are almost entirely funded by research grants, and as a result are limited to a few years. These positions are meant to deliver the research of course, but also to provide the opportunity for the researcher to develop specific and transferable skills so that they can step into another stage in their career.

A postdoc position is an excellent way to develop additional skills and experience, and researchers should think about the type of area they'd like to develop and identify ways to do so during their postdoc. They can for example aim to teach a few classes, supervise a student, write a funding application, lead the organisation of an event etc.

While subject-specific knowledge and technical skills are crucial, transferable skills, such as communication, management, or leadership, are arguably more important for researchers' career progression in the long run, and potential employment outside of the Higher Education sector.

The PDC encourages the development of such skills by pointing to existing university or external resources, advertising and organising workshops for researchers as well as by promoting ways for individuals to put their knowledge into practice.

## Development themes

On the PDC website, development opportunities are categorised in six themes: Methodologies and practices, Research dissemination, Impact and partnerships, Leadership and vision, Teaching and supervision, and Career development.
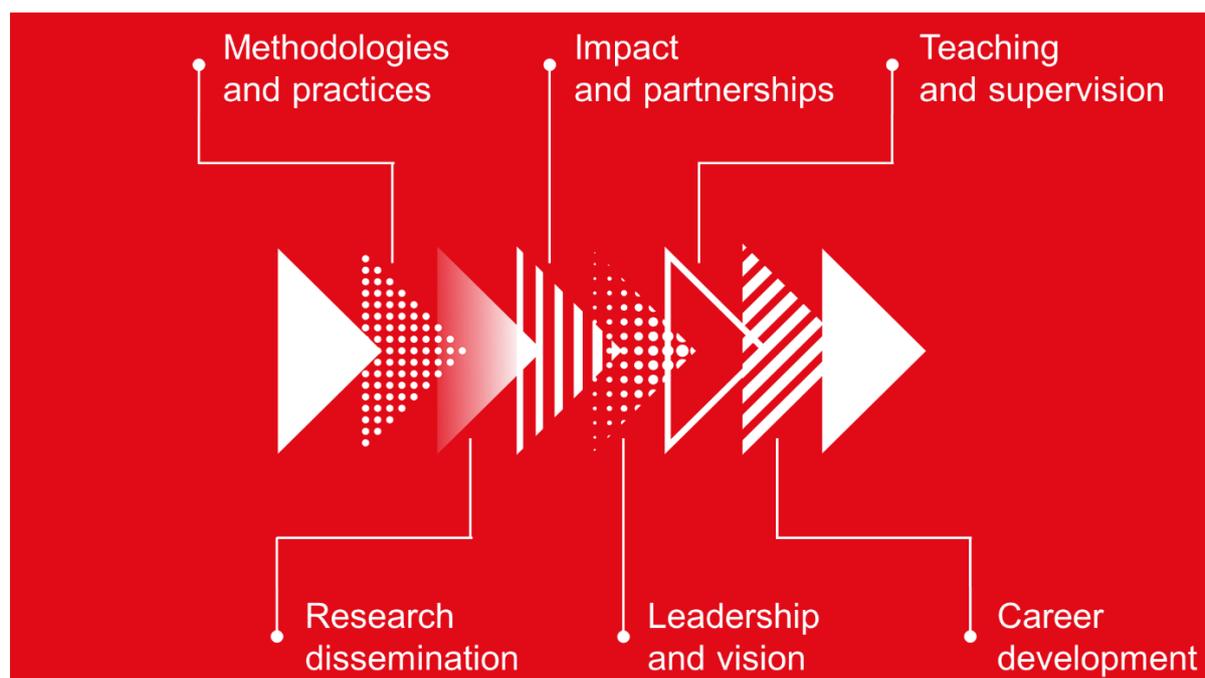
Resources include a list of "Core workshops" designed especially for researchers, regular events, and a range of online learning courses and packages (including free access to LinkedIn Learning and Nature Masterclasses).

## Core workshops

Core workshops may be provided directly by the PDC, by the Organisational Development team in People & Culture or other departments at Queen's and align with the themes mentioned above. They have been selected because they have been designed for or apply especially well to the needs of postdoctoral researchers.

The list evolves; please visit the Workshops and events page for most up-to-date listing, course content and dates of scheduled sessions.

Research dissemination:

- How to become a research social media influencer
- Researcher Writing Retreat
- Writing for Publication
- Storytelling for researchers

Impact and partnerships:

- Networking and Profile Building for Researchers
- Engaged Research and Impact: why are they important?

Leadership and vision:

- Postdoctoral Leadership Programme
- Developing Resilience: for those working in a research environment
- Time management for productive work and a happy life
- Project Management in a Research Environment
- The Strategic Researcher

Teaching and supervision:

- Effective use of voice
- Supervising skills for Assistant Supervisors and postdocs

Career development:

- Developing Your Research Career programme

- Defining Your Research Career: Exploring Alternative Pathways
- New postdoc induction
- Lectureships: Ready, Set, Go

- **Methodologies and practices**

Carrying out research requires discipline-specific expertise, technical and analytical skills. These skills are usually developed by researchers within their group or School, but a few additional resources are available centrally, notably related to research quality and integrity, available technology, literature searches, data management and IT skills.

Worth a look:

- Data management online training
- Ethical approval procedure
- Core Technology Units (state-of-the-art equipment, expertise, training)
- Library training

Visit the Methodologies and practices page

- **Research dissemination**

For research to have value and to make the world a better place, it needs to reach a range of audiences, including researchers across the world and the general public. There are many ways to disseminate your research, including publishing, presenting at conferences and public engagement. The Open Research team provides regular sessions on Pure and the Research portal.

Worth a look:

- Writing workshops
- Nature Masterclasses online training
- ORCID
- Open Access
- Conference funding, travel booking and poster printing
- Writing for The Conversation (getting research into mainstream media)

Visit the Research dissemination page

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### STEM Ambassador Programme

This UK-wide public engagement programme enables researchers in STEM disciplines (Sciences, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) to engage with young people in their schools or at public events, talk about their research and careers, helping them understand the world around them and inspire vocations. This is a great programme for postdocs to volunteer for.

More about the STEM Ambassador Programme

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- **Impact and partnerships**

Maximising the impact of research on the world we live in doesn't only requires communicating findings, but also partnering with the right stakeholders so that it can be translated in products or practices that benefit people. This includes working with policymakers, businesses, charities etc. or through research commercialisation and entrepreneurship.

Worth a look:

- Impact at Queen's
- Queen's Engaged Research Seed Fund
- Innovation and collaboration videos
- Networking online learning and workshops
- Impact and engagement workshops

Visit the Impact and partnerships page

Innovation programmes

Queen's is involved in organising a range of innovation, commercialisation or pre-accelerator programmes, which help researchers investigate the commercialisation potential of their research. This include test whether there is a market for an idea, product or service coming from their research. They may be aligned with a specific discipline or subject (e.g. health, digital technology, social enterprise…) and notably include the Lean Launch Programme (LLP) and the Innovation-to-Commercialisation of University Research programme (ICURe). Such programmes generally involve bespoke training, mentorship from relevant entrepreneurs and stakeholders, funding, and a lot of support. Each programme is different, but they often involve teams in which the postdoc is the lead and would become the CEO of their start-up if one were created. They can be a great springboard to an entrepreneur career or simply to build links with the industry sector.

More on innovation programmes

- **Leadership and vision**

Leadership skills are required for managerial roles in academia and other sectors and are important skills to efficiently deliver work on time (self-leadership), work with and manage colleagues, groups and partnerships (collective leadership) as well as design plans and inspire others (vision).

Worth a look:

- Postdoctoral Leadership Programme (2-day workshop)
- Time management for productive work and a happy life (workshop)
- Project Management in a research environment (workshop)
- Applying for and managing research grants (finance workshops)

Visit the Leadership and vision page

Postdoctoral Leadership Programme

This programme, delivered by the William J Clinton Leadership Institute, aims to help participants understand what leadership is, reflect on where and how they can play leadership roles and learn a number of core skills they can apply in any working environment, including academic research. Participants will be brought to reflect on how they can apply the principles discussed in the programme to their current situation or upcoming leadership challenges.

It notably includes a personal psychometric assessment (free!) to help you understand how people think, behave and communicate, a self-assessment of your leadership strengths and areas for growth, and advice on how to create an inspiring vision and use coaching skills to bring the best in others.

Introduced in 2021-22, the programme received a 4.6/5 rating and is recommended by 100% of the participants who provided feedback.

More on the Postdoctoral Leadership Programme

Leadership is notably involved in building an independent research career and developing proposals and fellowships. Researchers willing to become independent academics should look into understanding the funding landscape and system, build grant-writing skills and identify and apply for funding opportunities to build their track record.

Amongst funding that postdocs can apply for, fellowships provide a unique platform to kick-start their academic career, by enabling them to work on their own ideas, develop leadership and provide them with a track-record of securing research funding. Fellowships fund promising researchers to carry out their own innovative research projects (including salary and research costs). The Research Development Team supports applicants with their drafts, and, depending on the level of the fellowship, the university can provide an enhanced package of support to applicants (including additional funding, PhD studentship, academic career fast-track and membership of the Fellowship Academy).

Worth a look:

- Research Professional (funding database)
- Recorded fellowship events ("success with fellowships" and others)
- Illuminate Vice-Chancellor's Fellowship Scheme
- Research Development team contacts

Visit the Funding page | Visit the Fellowships page

Fellowship Application Videos

This series of videos was developed by the PDC and Research Development to provide quick bite-size information on the different aspects of a fellowship application and help candidates getting started.

It includes nine videos: "Introduction to fellowships", "Finding a fellowship", "Tips for a successful application (what to think about before starting to write)", "Research proposal", "Impact and dissemination", "Institution and support", "Finance", "CV and career plan" and "Ethical considerations".

Watch the Fellowship Application Videos

- **Teaching and supervision**

Teaching and supervision enable developing both communication and management skills, which are critical to many types of managerial roles, in and out of academia. Direct involvement with students, mentoring and peer-support are especially important when applying for lectureships.

Worth a look:

- Small group teaching and Laboratory demonstrating
- Canvas online courses
- Assistant Supervisor role (for postdocs involved in supervising PhDs)
- Supervising skills for Assistant Supervisors and postdocs (workshop)
- Teaching guidelines for postdocs

Visit the Teaching and supervision page

Higher Education Academy (HEA) Fellowships and Queen's Merit Award

The fellowships of the HEA are teaching certifications recognised in the UK and beyond. They demonstrate experience and commitment to quality teaching in a university environment. At Queen's, postdocs can apply to become Associate Fellow of the HEA for free, by engaging with the Queen's Merit Award coordinated by the Centre for Educational Development (CED). The requires contributing to teaching, collecting feedback from students and academics, attending a few classes and submitting an application, with support from the CED.

More about the Queen's Merit Award and the HEA Fellowships

- **Career development**

This will be developed in the next section.

# Career

It is a recognised part of a postdoc's role to develop themselves and plan their own career. To facilitate this, all researchers at Queen's are entitled 10 days per year to engage with career development activities not directly related to their project. Since Queen's is a signatory of the Researcher Development Concordat, it is even an obligation!

Postdoc positions (and other research positions) are funded to deliver a specific research project, and end when the project ends. It is thus essential for postdocs to plan their career, explore their options and apply for jobs. **It is an individual responsibility, but the PDC is here to help**.

As highlighted above, Queen's provides a range of "core workshops" to help research staff plan their careers and apply for jobs. These include the "Developing your research career" programme, the "Lectureship: Ready, Set, Go!" workshop and sessions on preparing CVs and interviews. The PDC induction for new postdocs also includes elements of career reflection and planning. There are also some career development tools available online, and we especially recommend Prosper, which was especially developed for postdocs.

Visit the Career development page

## Career exploration

The PDC and representatives in Schools organise events to help postdocs and researchers discover the range of career options available to them, and better understand what various roles entail, what it is like to work in a different sector, how to become a competitive candidate etc.

The format varies, including "speed-networking" events, career interviews, seminars etc., and covers both careers in academia and beyond.

> PDC Podcast: The theory of the postdoc evolution
>
> The PDC podcast includes edited recordings of some career exploration interviews, discussions with former postdocs or students about their job, and conversations on topics relevant to the postdoc experience. Episodes are available on the Podcast's page, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts and Spotify.

## Mentoring

Mentoring is a great way to help researchers develop their career, by hearing from experienced professionals about their own experience and receiving feedback. In addition to career-related topics, mentoring can also address how to best approach a range of professional situations and issues, or topics like work-life balance.

All postdocs and research staff at Queen's should have a career development discussion with their line manager (PI) at least once a year as part of their Personal Development Review (PDR). Line managers often provide advice and insight similar to mentoring in such occasions, but it is important to remember that they have invested interests, and having independent mentors is at times more appropriate.

Research careers are a continuum, and it is important to realise that the same way academics and established professionals can help postdocs by mentoring them, postdocs can also provide highly valuable insight to students and more junior staff (including PhDs) and should consider volunteering as mentors for such initiatives.

> ### The Postdoc Group Mentoring Scheme
>
> Every year, Organisational Development and the PDC run a mentoring programme in which small groups of postdocs are paired with an academic (or business/industry professional) to discuss their personal and career development. Participants don't only benefit from the experience of their mentor, but also from their peers. It usually takes place in the second semester, with enrolment at the end of the first.
>
> Visit the Postdoc Group Mentoring Scheme page

## Personalised support (1-to-1)

The PDC manager provides one-to-one individual and personalised support to postdocs and research staff. This can be feedback on a CV, interview preparation, career discussion etc. The PDC even provides mock interviews when possible, which include a panel of postdoc volunteers and benefit both the candidate and panel.

Such support can be provided through 1-to-1 meetings (online or on-campus as appropriate) or by email depending on circumstances.

Visit the Personalised support page

# Policy and guidance

The PDC takes an active role in identifying and addressing issues faced by postdocs to improve their experience at Queen's and make the university a positive and supportive environment.

This includes developing and adapting policies, creating good practice guidance, defining expectations, and even clarifying existing policies to highlight how they apply to postdocs. It notably helps postdocs and their managers understand what they can reasonably do or not and foster a positive research culture.

This type of work is informed by the Representatives' Network (see next section) or other types of consultation with postdocs, academics and relevant members of professional services staff.

Examples:

- 10 career development days policy: this policy allows all research staff at Queen's 10 days per year to spend as they wish on activities benefitting their career development

- Assistant Supervisor role: this role enables to officially recognise the contributions postdocs make to the supervision of PhD students, and provide a framework for postdocs willing to get involved and develop supervisory experience in a safe environment

- Work-life Balance guidance: the PDC and members of the PDC Representatives' Network have brought together policies, guidance and tips for postdocs and their managers that can help promoting a positive work-life balance in research

- Teaching guidelines: these were established while the PDC was being piloted in the MHLS faculty and have not yet been transposed to other faculties. They define good practice in terms of involving postdocs in teaching so that they get valuable experience for their CV without overwhelming them

Visit the Policies and guidance page

# Representation

Maintaining quality support and a positive experience over time and across schools requires mechanisms for researchers and academics to contribute shaping elements impacting the postdoc experience at Queen's.

More detail on postdoc representation and contacts of current representatives

## PROG

The Postdoctoral and Research staff Oversight Group (PROG) is a University-wide committee reporting to the Research and Innovation committee. It oversees general University strategy relevant to postdocs and research staff. One of the important roles of PROG is to review the progress of the PDC and of the implementation of the University's Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan. It includes representation from each Faculty and postdocs involved in specific initiatives (e.g., Postdoc Society) are invited to come talk about them.

## PDC Representatives' network

The PDC Representatives' network includes postdocs and academics from Schools across the three Faculties.

The representatives provide feedback and input on PDC initiatives, both in terms of defining priorities and shaping what they would look like, report on the needs and issues of postdocs in their area and ensure relevant opportunities and practices are communicated to postdocs, academic staff, and senior management locally. They also act as "champions" for their local area, acting as point-of-contact for local postdocs, linking to their senior

management team and organising local gatherings, events, communications etc. as appropriate. They may gather a bigger team of postdoc volunteers to help with some aspects of their role.

## Local groups

In addition to PDC Network Representatives, some Schools, Centres and Faculties may have established groups of researchers as local committees or societies. These groups often organise discipline-specific events like symposia or seminars, as well-as networking and community-building social events.

## The Postdoc Society

The Postdoc Society is led by and made up of postdocs and research staff from all Faculties at Queen's. It was established at the end of 2022 as a cross-Faculty group supporting postdocs and research staff during their time at Queen's. The society plays a crucial role in organising events and initiatives that promote networking between researchers across the institution, including social and networking events, research-related events (e.g., Postdoc Showcase), wellbeing events etc. The provision varies based on the interest of its members. As a group, the society is also keen to engage with students, as well as promoting the profiles of postdocs and their research to the wider university and the public.

It receives some advice as well as financial and administrative support from the PDC as needed, but is in charge of its own programme. Don't hesitate to contact the society if you are interested to join the group.

Postdoc Society page | PostdocSociety@qub.ac.uk | Twitter @QUBPostdocSoc

# Recognition

Postdocs and researchers are key to deliver University research but are also involved in disseminating research, translating it into impact, training and mentoring students, and contributing to shaping Queen's environment and culture.

The PDC aims at celebrating postdocs' achievements across these different aspects of their role and ensure University Policies and practices accurately recognise their contributions (see Policy and guidance section for examples).

Visit the Recognition page

## National Postdoc Appreciation Week (NPAW)

National Postdoc Appreciation Week was set up by the National Postdoc Association (NPA; USA association) in 2009 and, since Queen's introduced a local programme in 2018, has

spread in the UK too. The aim of NPAW is to recognize and celebrate the contribution of postdocs to research and discovery. NPAW takes place the week of the third Monday of September and includes a range of local events for postdocs, online UK/ROI-wide events, and social media campaigns, notably using #LovePostdocs.

The PDC provides some funding and support to a group of motivated postdoc volunteers who organise NPAW initiatives at Queen's. These may include a "Postdoc Showcase"-type event, social gatherings, highlights on postdoc profiles etc.

The PDC also coordinates the PDC Postdoc Awards, which are awarded during NPAW.

National Postdoc Appreciation Week page

## The PDC Postdoc Awards

The PDC Postdoc Awards aim to recognise the involvement of postdocs to the University in terms of research, contributions to the life of the University, contributions to Public Engagement and in the provision of support for their group, colleagues, School etc. They are coordinated by the PDC but funded by individual Faculties.

Each Faculty provides several categories of awards, aligned with the tasks their postdocs are mostly involved in. Postdocs are nominated by staff (or students when applicable) and nominations are evaluated by a panel including Faculty representatives.

The award winners are announced during National Postdoc Appreciation Week.

PDC Postdoc Awards page

## Sharing postdoc achievements



Academic life is full of setbacks, and it is important to celebrate successes when they happen. The PDC is keen to share successes of any kind; publication of papers, funding, awards/prizes, new jobs etc. via social media. Anyone can send information to the PDC or tag @QUBpostdoc on Twitter to highlight their own achievements or those of their peers. Profiles of Queen's postdocs also get showcased on the website and social media at the occasion of specific initiatives like NPAW (examples of profiles).

# Fellowship holders

Fellowship holders, or "Fellows", are postdoctoral researchers owning their own fellowship to fund both their salary and project. There are different levels of fellowships depending on the stage of career; for example, early career fellows tend to be working closely with a PI, in their lab, using some of their resources and still receiving a lot of guidance, while independent fellows are building their own lab.
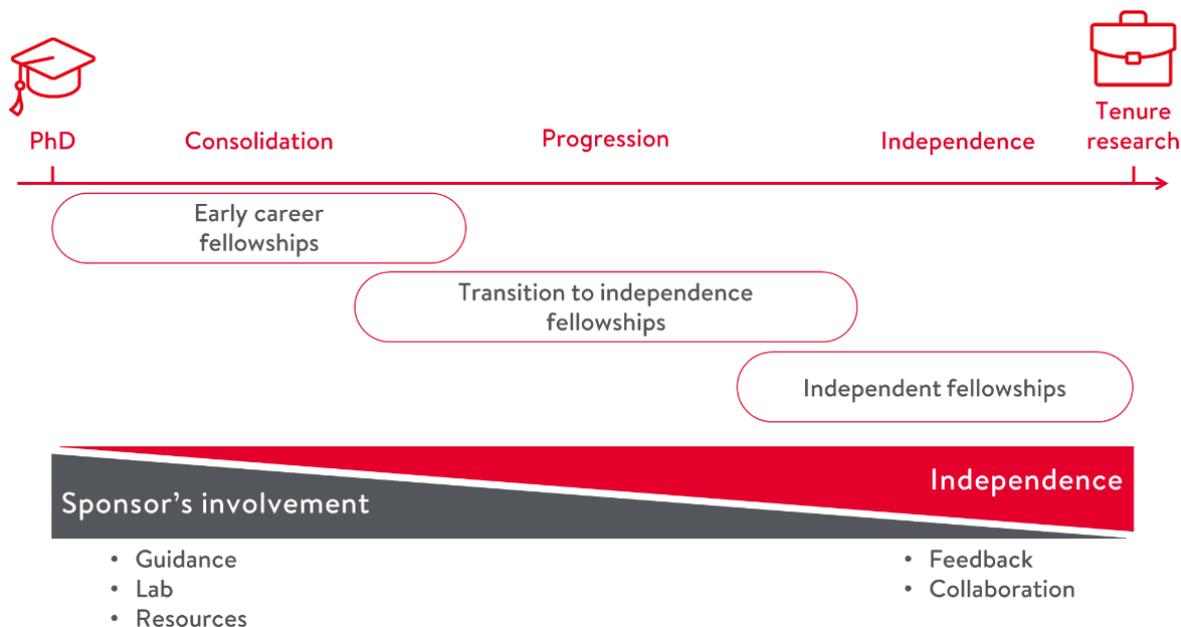
The PDC provision is more tailored towards postdocs and early career fellows, but all fellows are welcome to engage with PDC resources and support.

Fellows at all stages whose fellowship is of two years minimum are invited to be part of the Fellowship Academy, a University-wide initiative building a strong fellows community and providing them with appropriate support to establish their research at Queen's. This includes networking, training and events in the areas of research funding, leadership and impact.
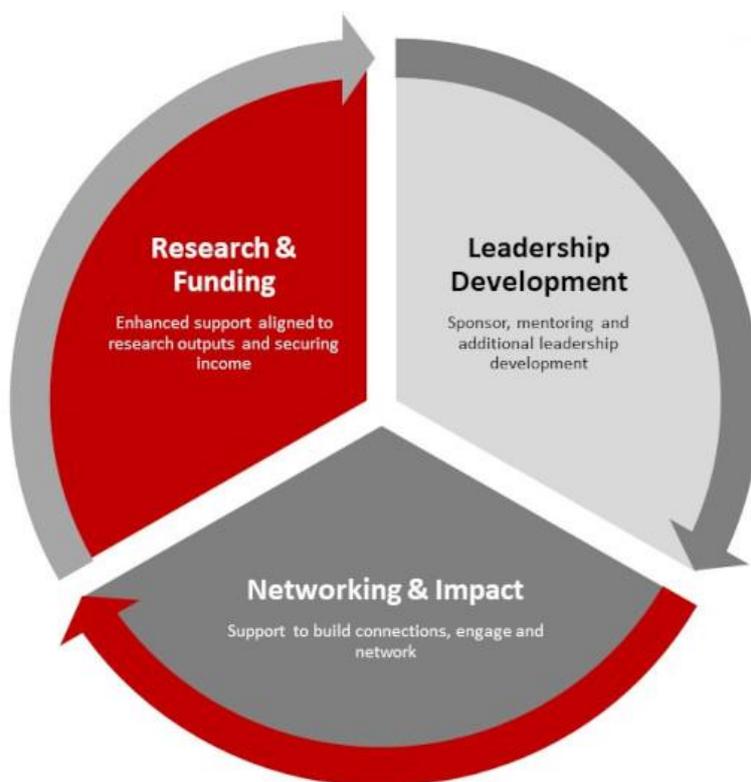
Fellows are encouraged to especially look for resources relevant to leadership and management, networking events, funders meetings etc. to develop the adequate skills needed for their progression as a research leader, student supervisor, collaborator and staff manager.

As mentioned earlier, independent fellows such as Vice-Chancellor's fellows and recipients of equivalently independent external fellowships are eligible for enhanced support including financial advantages and PhD studentships (view fellowships eligible for enhanced support).

# Appendix: New postdoc checklist

Please note that this list isn't exhaustive and that some of the actions listed may not apply to you (for example they may be more relevant to new international staff).

## Before moving to Belfast:

- ☐ Send the relevant forms to P&C (acceptance of post…)
- ☐ Verify the validity of your ID and travel documents (passport…)
- ☐ Enquire and apply for a visa (if relevant)
- ☐ Enquire for accommodation
- ☐ Organise an appointment with P&C, a bank etc

## When arriving in Belfast, before starting your postdoc:

- ☐ Finalise your accommodation and get your proof of address
- ☐ Bring your original certificates and your address to P&C, get your employment letter
- ☐ Register with the police (if relevant)
- ☐ Open a bank account and give your bank details to P&C
- ☐ Call to set up an appointment to get your national insurance number (give it to P&C when received)
- ☐ Email your PI to arrange the time and place to meet on your first day (your offer letter will by default say 9 am on your first day but you need to confirm this with your PI)

## In your first week:

- ☐ Set up an appointment with P&C to get your staff card
- ☐ Request your personal code and access to relevant facilities
- ☐ Enquire about local inductions and welcoming schemes for researchers
- ☐ Visit the PDC website, identify potential courses, programmes and events of interest and sign-up for the next PDC induction
- ☐ Arrange an appointment with occupational health
- ☐ Enquire about health & safety training in your school/centre
- ☐ Set up your workstation, email signature etc.
- ☐ Complete the Queen's mandatory training for all staff on QOL

## In your first month:

- ☐ Register to a GP practice
- ☐ Fill up your personal information on QOL (ICE…)
- ☐ Add a picture and relevant information to your Pure and Office 365 profiles
- ☐ Meet with your PI and asks for a copy of the grant on which you are working, discuss your project objectives, training and career goals
- ☐ Ask your PI to introduce you to relevant collaborators, students or member of staff

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