

THE POST-PHD PLAN

Writing up your thesis? Worried about where you'll end up next? And how you will get there? It might seem difficult to find your next role, or you might be unsure about what you'll be doing soon. You can, and in fact should, start thinking about what you'll be doing in the next stage of your scientific career, even if you haven't yet started to write up your thesis. Make sure you give yourself plenty of time to find employment – 12 months is a safe window for most students to find a suitable position for the next chapter in life. We've collated some useful information to help you in your search to find a post-PhD position and some ideas to start the chain of communication to your potential employers.

STAYING IN RESEARCH

Contact the Principal Investigators (PIs) of the labs you're interested in working in directly. Write to these PIs individually, do not send a mass email to any department. Be discreet and professional.

An alternative to cold calling is to look for postdoctoral research positions that are advertised online. Some common places to look for a postdoctoral (including within industry) positions are listed below:

Scientific journals

- Nature Jobs (www.nature.com/naturejobs/science)
- Science Jobs (sciencecareers.sciencemag.org)

Bulletin boards

- Craigslist (www.craigslist.org) – listed by state/country
- Postdocjobs (www.postdocjobs.com)

Newspapers

- SEEK (www.seek.com.au)
- CareerOne (www.careerone.com.au)
- New Scientist (jobs.newscientist.com/en-au)

Here are some job websites of Australian universities to start you off

- Australian National University (jobs.anu.edu.au)
- Monash University (www.monash.edu.au/jobs)
- University of Adelaide (www.adelaide.edu.au/jobs)
- University of Melbourne (www.hr.unimelb.edu.au/careers)
- University of New South Wales (www.careers.unsw.edu.au)
- University of Queensland (www.uq.edu.au/uqjobs)
- University of Sydney (sydney.edu.au/positions)
- University of Western Australia (www.jobs.uwa.edu.au)

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You'll likely be applying for a postdoctoral fellowship to support you in the next stage of your career. Many fellowships also exist for a specific burden of disease, contact your Research Office for information on these opportunities. Here are some general fellowship schemes:

Australian research fellowship schemes

- National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC; www.nhmrc.gov.au)
 - Australian Full Time (four years in an Australian Institution, must be a different supervisor from your PhD): Peter Doherty; Australian Clinical Research; Public Health Australia
 - Overseas (two years overseas and two years in Australia): CJ Martin Fellowship (Biomedical); Neil Hamilton Fairley (Clinical); Sidney Sax (Public Health); INSERM (exchange with France)
- Australian Society of Medical Research (ASMR; www.asmr.org.au)
- Australian Research Council (ARC; www.arc.gov.au)
 - Discovery Early Career Research Awards

European research fellowship schemes

- EMBO (www.embo.org/funding-awards/fellowships)
- Wellcome Trust (www.wellcome.ac.uk/Funding/Biomedical-science/Funding-schemes/Fellowships/index.htm)

ALTERNATIVES TO RESEARCH

There are also employment opportunities in the pharmaceutical industry (managerial, sales and research). Scientific writing, science communication and teaching are also options. You may be able to find these positions in some of the websites listed above or on specific company websites.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Most job advertisements will specify selection criteria that you should pay careful attention to and address in your responses in your application. When selecting a potential laboratory to work in, you should also consider whether you're suitable for them and vice versa. Do you have training and skills that might be important for the lab, and can you also learn new techniques and grow your skillset? Depending on what you're planning for in the short-term and long-term, these aspects are important to consider. When writing to a potential PI, you should include what you know about their research team, show that you're familiar with their work, how you can contribute and what you can gain and learn from them. Tell them why you want to join their team. It would be thoughtful to show you can design projects and experiments and be creative. Bring up your background in research - what you investigated during your PhD and how it relates to your next position, if it's relevant. You should also attach a brief CV (1-2 pages) which includes your list of publications, oral and poster presentations, conferences attended, awards, etc. Just remember to give yourself enough time to apply for employment and consider the possibilities available to you.

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