

CCBIO Opinion

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CCBIO ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Young researchers face an enormous uphill struggle when it comes to taking their next career steps, having an overwhelming number of decisions to make even years before the time comes. "What comes after a postdoc? How and when can I become a PI? How can I build my own research group? Should I move location?" are just a few of the big questions they have. One major complication is a wide range of career paths and structures across universities and countries. Academic careers have become dynamic systems that are continuously changing – trying to adapt to the needs of the institutions and the society. With its established network of researchers, world-wide expertise, and resources, CCBIO is in a unique position to help its next generation get ready.

The current situation in Norway

A recent study by NIFU (Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research, and Education) showed that only one in five postdocs at Norwegian universities have become associate or full professors within five years after their postdoctoral period ended¹. This is

despite qualifying for faculty positions being the institutions' declared main goal of postdoctoral positions. Even more surprising: half the postdocs have left academia within five years after their postdoctoral period is over. This report comes after many years of debate into the use of postdoctoral positions and what it should mean to do a postdoc. A postdoc is not just a continuation of a PhD, and a postdoc should not be "just another researcher". During their postdoctoral periods, researchers are supposed to acquire the skills and tools needed to make their next career steps, whether that is inside or outside of academia. However, postdocs all around the world struggle to turn their temporary positions into full-time, stable careers².

Climbing the ladder: what should you do during your postdoc?

Most postdoctoral researchers in Norway reported of lacking a career plan and proper follow-up of their progress. While some researchers proceed to have successful careers outside of Norway, others struggle

to make it within their Norwegian home institutions. What should you do during your postdoc? You will hear many answers to this, but most likely: everything! That is a daunting task. Your main priority should be on your research activities while increasing your independence, developing your own ideas, showing seniority in publications and collaborations. Generally, first- and last author publications are a must, and then come the "other tasks" you should embark on. From the start of your postdoc, you should get an overview of the skills, teaching, supervisory, (international) networking, and funding application and acquisition experience expected by the end of your postdoctoral period.

While planning for your career, you should always consider the possibilities at your home institution. Could you become a (co-)supervisor for master students and PhD candidates? Could you gain lecturing experience? Can you apply for your own funding or co-apply? The University of Bergen provides its junior researchers with



these opportunities, but many do not know that these options are available to them.

CCBIO's policy on career development
CCBIO wants to ensure that the next generation of researchers have the tools they need to make the right decisions when it comes to their careers. In addition to the already comprehensive stimuli from the CCBIO Research School

for Cancer Studies, we are therefore introducing the CCBIO Masterclass Program (see separate chapters on both) where up to 10 post-PhD researchers will participate each year and receive mentorship, guidance, and training. During their one-year Masterclass period, the candidates are encouraged to discuss their career paths widely and to review their course and aims throughout the process. CCBIO thereby

aims to motivate and challenge the participants. But most of all: we aim to facilitate their climb to the top. ••

1. Lang vei til toppstilling for postdoktorene, NIFU, <https://www.nifu.no/news/lang-vei-til-toppstilling-for-postdoktorene/>

2. Uncertain prospects for postdoctoral researchers, *Nature*, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-03381-3>