

The main objective of the Helmholtz-Career-Center-for-Postdocs at the Max Planck Institute for Plasma Physics (Career Center) is to support postdocs in their career planning and development. The postdoctoral phase is an important period in the professional life of scientists as the direction for their further professional development is now set. In this phase, we want to support our postdocs, so that they not only have the opportunity to develop their scientific profile, but also to improve their abilities in other fields necessary for their professional future in research or industry.

The most important element of the Career Center is the annual Career Conversation between the supervising person and the postdoc. The conversation is a supportive measure for the postdoc with two aims:

- Long term: the postdoc should come out of the career conversation with a clearer picture of her/his own career options and goals.
- Short term: drafting a career action plan for the next 18 months.

The following guidelines provide the frame for the career conversations and are meant as a supportive structure for both, the supervisor and the postdoc.

1. Preparation

Before the career conversations takes place please take some time and think about the following:

Supervisor:

What are the strengths of the postdoc?

In your opinion, which measures could support the postdoc in improving his/her personal skills?

Postdoc:

Where do you want to be at the height of your career? You can dream and be unrealistic. Prepare 2 or 3 scenarios of your most favourite career goals.

2. Career Conversation

Step 1:

The starting point of the conversation is the situation of the postdoc at the moment. In the first career conversation, the supervisor can use opening questions such as: Where did you go to school? Why did you choose your subject? What have you studied and where? Where did you do your PhD? What did you do during your previous postdoc years?

In follow-up meetings a suitable starting question could be: How did you experience the last year here at IPP? Which activities in your current position do you like/ do you not like?

In all cases, the following questions should be answered: What can you do best? Which skills do you enjoy using? Where do you see your strengths?

Step 2:

The Postdoc tells about his/her career dreams.

Step 3:

The conversation picks up the dreams and the strengths of the Postdoc. The supervisor's opinion of the postdoc's strengths or areas of development are valuable elements of the conversation, as well. A realistic picture of the short-term career options can emerge. Together the postdoc and the supervisor determine the development objectives and draft a career action plan for the next 18 months.

After the career conversation

The postdoc writes the career action plan, listing which development objectives have been defined and which measures will be taken to achieve them. A template can be found in the annex. Bullet points are sufficient.

Both, the postdoc and the supervisor, sign the career action plan.

The career action plan is sent to the Career Center (careercenter@ipp.mpg.de)

The Career Center uses the career action plan in a twofold way:

1. for planning of courses or other offers
2. for documentation that the career conversation has taken place

The postdoc fills in an online questionnaire (a link will be sent by e-mail) which is used to evaluate the career conversations.

Contact persons of the CC

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Annex 1 Career action plan elements

Postdoc (Name)
Supervisor (Name)
Date
Organisational unit
Career prospects for the next 10 years
Development Objectives (which skills do you want to gain/improve, examples see ¹⁾)
Qualification requirements (actions to achieve the objectives, examples see ²⁾)
Other
visited courses last year

1) Development of specific professional expertise, Development of specific soft skill, Responsibility for projects, Managing and supervising employees, Language improvement

2) Attend course '**** name subject *****' (see <https://www.ipp.mpg.de/ccpostdoc>), External research stay, Auto-didactical initiative