

The Roads to a Post Doc

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IBMP

What is a post doc?

- The best of times, the worst of times
 - The best
 - May give you unprecedented freedom to work with what you really like, without the pressure of completing a thesis.
 - The worst
 - May end up as a kind of academic slavery

- A post doc period is not (necessarily) a continuation of a your PhD work
- Be prepared to change the direction of your work
- Be prepared to be mobile
- Some institutions have particular demands of a post doc in terms of number of publications per year. We don't.

- Essential to make contact with potential mentors as early as possible and to agree on the project and your role in the project.
- You might be applying for an independent project or, more likely these days, you might want to be included in a larger project run by your mentor (PI).
- If the latter, ensure that you have the personal and technical skills which are needed, and that the PI knows this.
- The PI cannot appoint who she/he likes to a post doc position. Positions have to be advertised.

Financing

- Piggy-back on a larger project
- Team-work



- Faculty post doc positions
 - Open competition
 - Unpredictable when and how many are available
 - You still need a mentor
- **START THINKING EARLY**
 - Are you willing to move city and country?
 - Are you willing to sacrifice your pet project?

Finding the money yourself

- NFR does not finance personal post doc positions except for NFR Young Research Talents
- The health programmes in NFR do not finance personal post doc positions but large grants may cover post doc salary.

Main components of the NFR category for Young Research Talent

- Young Research Talent will be one of four application categories under the **FRIPRO** scheme. Applicants in this category must satisfy the following criteria to qualify for funding:
- The applicant must have demonstrated the ability to conduct independent research of high scientific quality **beyond his or her doctoral work**.
- The applicant must be 39 years or younger as of the date of the deadline for submission of grant applications (this age-limit may be extended by the addition of time to compensate for formal leaves of absence or long-term sick leave, regardless of when the leaves of absence/sick leave took place).
- Individuals with permanent or temporary positions at universities, university colleges or independent research institutes are eligible to apply for funding.
- This grant may be sought a maximum of three times.
- This grant may be received only once.

- Helse Vest and other health authorities
- EU Individual Fellowships
- ERC Starting Grants
- Several bilateral international programmes, e.g. DAAD (Germany), National Science Foundation (USA), AURORA (France)
- Fulbright Foundation (USA)
- Peder Sather Grant (Berkeley)
- Bergen Forskningsstiftelse (joint financing with faculty)

Information about financing

- Funding bodies change their guidelines and rules continuously. Check them!
- Stefanie Meyer, Research Section, can advise.

- Perhaps the most common method of getting a post doc position is by joining a larger project.
- The importance of finding the right mentor.
 - A good personal and scientific fit is essential
- If the post doc project is part of a larger grant, this might restrict your scientific freedom.
- Make sure that your mentor is a listener if you want to become an independent researcher.

My experience (ancient history)

- Started in a pub in Scotland in 1974, just into my PhD
- Somebody mentioned a two week training programme in Bergen run by the European Training Programme in Brain and Behaviour Research



- First meeting with Holger Ursin and Håkan Sundberg



- Three years later, PhD nearly completed and time to think of the future
- Requested advice from Holger on the next stage in my career.
- Many letters backwards and forwards about the content of the project.

Dear Bob,

Also, there are many unsolved questions as to the relationship between you and me. Yes, you are certainly welcome to work in my lab, given that you find money for your own existence, and that the research project is suitable. I wish you luck with your application.

- Eventually the direction of the project was settled
- Financed for one year (with possibility of extending to two years) by The Royal Society under the European Science Exchange Programme.
- Note from my sponsor: "*Domestic help is very difficult to come by in Norway*"

- The lesson learnt...
- Find someone you can work with
- Nag them very gently. Don't be too pushy.
- **START EARLY!**

**HAVE A GOOD
WEEKEND!**