MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

incite

ISSUE 17 SPRING 2014 RESEARCH STAFF SKILLS TRAINING NEWSLETTER

Seeing the bigger picture
Short-term contracts: long-term focus

In this Issue

Take back control of your time

"What you achieve in a given time period is a measure of how well you invest that time"

Work is a continuously changing entity, and – by definition – that is hard to manage. However, we can manage individual activities so that our goals are achieved within reasonable time, ultimately allowing progress in our careers. Managing our day-to-day activities will help us feel more in control, less stressed, and able to focus on longer-term goals. Detailed below, are the core elements of an effective time management system. You probably don't need all of them – pick and choose what you think will work for you.

1. Organisation

If you often feel stressed about juggling many tasks or worrying about forgetting to do things, it may be that your organisation system isn't working. Not having a "system" is still a system – it's just that your brain has to continuously review everything that has to be done. It can therefore be useful to have a paper or computer-based approach, and a good filing system. There are many time management tools available (books, apps, etc.), but even just using paper can be helpful. You need to keep track of all ongoing projects, the steps involved to complete them, their priority, and required completion date. This information needs to be reviewed regularly and used to decide what task to start next. Having a good system you can trust (e.g. you can write down a task knowing you will not forget it because you will review the list) can free your mind; imagine your brain as a computer, and all that RAM being taken up by constantly thinking about what has to be done when, how, with whom, etc. Google "time management systems" to get started. See: http://12most.com/2012/09/27/methodical-time-management-systems

2. Protect your time

Using your diary can be a helpful way of ensuring tasks will be done within a fixed timescale. If you know that within two weeks you have to complete a task that requires 4 hours work, schedule it as time in your diary. If you are then asked to do another task at that time, you can explain it needs to wait because the scheduled task is a priority. You can then use your diary to schedule in time for the next task (however long that will take) and assure your boss that it will completed on that date. Sticking to your schedule will help you focus, and also help you to assess your workload.

If your entire week becomes full of tasks that have been given reasonable time to work on, anything extra is too much. This strategy is good for ensuring important tasks don't get missed amongst the rest of your day-to-day activities.

The other thing you should do with this diary is to also schedule in fun things. A night out or concert placed in your diary will spur you on when you check your diary each day. After all, "all work and no play…".

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Note from the Editor

A career in research often means being pulled in various directions at once; whether it's managing different projects or meeting deadlines, normally within a temporary contract where time is precious. Maintaining perspective on bigger career goals, whether it's getting that collaboration going or applying for funding, can be challenging under such circumstances.

In this issue of Incite, we offer advice on working out what your long term vision is, how to factor this in to your daily working life, and practical ways to initiate career-strengthening skills. We also chat to talented academic staff on how they have achieved their goals, and how to make the most of your research time. We hope this edition gives you the tools you need to remember the bigger picture!

Selina McHarg, MHS

Take back control of your time (continued from page 1)

3. Beat bad time habits

Identify the areas where you lose the most time, and plan strategies to eradicate them.

If you're unsure where you lose a lot of time, keep a "time diary" for one week listing everything you do at work and how much time that takes up.

For example, if you find you spend 1-2 hours a week looking through a massive pile of paperwork, spend 2 hours the next week implementing a good filing system, and that's 2 hours a week saved from them on. You might also realise you waste time on tasks that are not a priority, and being aware of that will help you prioritise the right tasks.

Procrastination is a condition we all suffer from. There are workshops available at the University in combatting this. Also see: **http://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/29-ways-to-beat-procrastination-once-and-for-all.html**

4. Set clear goals

Goals should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed. Setting a goal of "publish a paper within 6 months" isn't smart. A goal of "Publish a paper on sample X using technique Y that is doable, and novel enough for publication, within 6 months, in journal Z, with help from person A, B and C" is very SMART. Keep a list of these goals so that if you get side-tracked with new tasks for a few weeks you remember to then set time aside towards achieving that goal. Also, make a list of all the intermediary steps required to achieve that goal, such as "obtain sample from person A", "characterise sample", "schedule lab time with person B". You can focus on the next required step. Setting unrealistic or unmanageable goals is simply setting yourself up for a fall.

5. Make an ASAP list

At work we are continuously given new tasks, some large, some small, some required soon and some required urgently. For tasks that you don't know how to handle, or are unsure of without spending time on them, make a "do as soon as possible" list. Once on that list you should forget about it and complete what you were currently doing, to ensure you don't keep dropping tasks whenever a new one is given. Then whenever you have free time, you can first review this list, and choose the task with the highest priority.

There is no wrong or right way to manage your time – just pick and choose and make a system that works for you. It's not about getting obsessed with a particular method; it's about reducing wasted time and stress levels by taking back some control. Any system you implement can help as long as you stick with it and trust it.

> *"Everything takes three-times longer than planned. Set aside enough time for what is important, and don't let it get elbowed aside by urgent but unimportant tasks and deadlines, usually demanded by others."*
>
> **PDRA, EPS**

> *"I try to be aware of the deadlines, anytime I have to do anything, whether it is giving a talk or finishing a paper. I plan my time by working from the deadline backwards."*
>
> **Fellow, EPS**

Resources:

http://12most.com/2012/09/27/methodical-time-management-systems/

http://www.lifeh

ack.org/articles/productivity/29-ways-to-beat-procrastination-once-and-for-all.html

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_HTE.htm

http://www.businessballs.com/timemanagement.htm

http://www.lifehack.org/articles/technology/top-15-time-management-apps-and-tools.html

http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/help/build-an-effective-time-management-system-HA001195943.aspx

http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/219553

With the benefit of hindsight: researchers' advice for achieving your career goals

By Samaneh Maysami (MHS), Kassandra Papadopoulou (EPS), Sarah King-Hele (Humanities)

As part of a career development programme series run at the University in collaboration with the Research Staff Association and Vitae, we asked researchers what advice they would go back and give themselves when they first started out. The top 6 points identified were:

1. Establish clear medium and long-term goals, and build effective strategies to achieve them
2. Aim to publish sooner rather than later (involving producing sufficient high-quality data)
3. Collaborate and build a strong network to create a good list of contacts in and around your field, even including work on different research projects when possible
4. Increase knowledge and skills wherever possible
5. Participate in extra-curricular activities such as teaching and public engagement events
6. Bid for internal or external funding as soon as possible

This survey shows that researchers generally look back and wish they had started, or were at least fully aware of, all the career development possibilities open to them from an early stage. A lot of these issues arise from junior researchers overlooking certain opportunities, or not being aware of them at all, due to the pressure of working within very short fixed-term contracts. Having defined goals and holding on to clear strategic plans will certainly help researchers to achieve this.

The survey was responded to by researchers across all faculties (MHS 31%, Humanities 31 EPS 31% & FLS 6%) and by a wide range of researchers (Research associate 87.5%, Technical assistance 6.25% and PhD students 6.25%).

Where am I now? – Where do I want to be? – How do I get there?

Working as a researcher under short-term contracts with short-term goals, it can be difficult to forge a long-term career path. Instability causes anxiety and can affect all aspects of our lives. But it is possible to minimize these issues by maintaining a vision of where you would like your future career to go. Creating a vision of your future is a simple process that can help make sure you are maximizing your potential within the confinements of a short-term contract.

Getting started

First of all you need to make an honest assessment of where you are now: what skills and what achievements you have to date. Having a performance and development review is a good way for this to happen, since your supervisor is likely to be in the type of position you would potentially like to be in in the future. If not, you can do this yourself by asking:

1. What have I achieved so far? (e.g. publications, outreach, teaching, collaborations, grants – however small)
2. What skills do I have? (e.g. experimental, analytical, IT, supervisory)
3. What are my strengths and weaknesses?

What do you need to do to make your aims viable?

The next step is to imagine an ideal future. Ask the same questions imagining you are in that future position. You might have more publications, including one or two high-level publications, you might have an active collaboration underway, and lots of teaching experience. Allow yourself to fantasize a bit, detailing the accomplishments achieved along the way to getting to that point.

Now, looking at your current and ideal future situations, you need to assess what the gaps are, and rank them in terms of importance. For instance, you might have publications and some collaborative experience but absolutely no teaching experience. Or you might have lots of teaching practice but little output and collaborative work. These gaps are what you should then be mindful of. For example, at some point in the future you may be asked to work in another collaborative study. At the same time an e-mail from the head of your school may come round seeking volunteers for some undergraduate teaching. Maybe, if you have no teaching experience, it would be better to take this opportunity over the new collaboration if you don't have the time for both, since you will be developing a key skill (needed for your future career!) that you currently lack. This is an overly-simplified example of how being mindful of where you need to get to in the future can inform your everyday decisions.

As another example, maybe you see yourself moving into industry or the private sector. You might identify a long list of skills that you think will be desirable for these positions, including administration, awareness of markets, etc. In this case teaching may not be a necessary skill at all and if you are approached to take on teaching duties you may wish to turn this down because, honestly, you don't see yourself needing this skill. Instead you could seek out opportunities to help manage small grants or other administrative duties, or any potential industry collaborations.

Identify strengths and weaknesses as a starting point for building skills

These are all simple examples. However, the point is clear: if you do not have a vision of where you want to be in the future, it's difficult to make good choices in your current position. Simply taking on every opportunity available, in an effort to "keep all the doors open", becomes more and more difficult and inefficient as time goes on and workload mounts up.

Realistically, a lot of us do not have a clue about where we think we want to be in the future. In this case how can we make good decisions for the future? Firstly, once you assess your skillset you can identify gaps straight away. After you've identified your strengths, you can identify your weaknesses. Again, a good performance and development review should help to identify your weaknesses or missing skills that are generally useful for all roles. In this case, you can be mindful of these things and use this information to inform your ongoing choices. At least you know that you are continuously increasing your skillset.

Beyond this, start thinking about what type of future career you would like or be suited for. Imagine a few scenarios (e.g. lecturer, industry professional, or work in a completely different sector), and write down what would be good or bad about these. Think about having some coaching sessions. These are widely available across the University (contact your faculty researcher development office, contacts on the back page) – and are a great way of thinking about future possibilities and reducing negative thinking. Negative thoughts ("I'm doomed, this is leading nowhere, there's nothing to be done" etc.) are a real killer to maintaining a future vision. Try and remember that you can always make some good out of your current situation. Again, maximizing your skillset whenever possible, especially skills you know will definitely be required in the future, will not only help you in the future but will also help you to feel like you are in control and more in charge of your own destiny.

Prioritise accordingly: what can I be flexible on? What's my passion?

As researchers we also need to be flexible. Many people relocate long distances as they move from one position to the next. Many people change (or at least shift) fields. Your future vision may need to be flexible too. You might identify that you want to get to a certain position, but that you actually don't mind what field you're in. In this case you may see a job advertised, realise you have all the core skills required, and become more open to that opportunity, since you know you want to advance but not necessarily within the same field. On the other hand you may realise you only want to stay in that field because it's the only way you will be passionate about your research. In that case you won't waste time thinking about applying for other things because you know that, for you, this is the critical component.

Review periodically as your career progresses

Finally, once you start acting with your future vision strongly in your mind, it's important to adjust the picture every now and then. This could be once or twice a year, or could also be done after a major achievement. For example, you might spend several months working up to a major publication, after which you may want to adjust your focus. Go back to the start and review your current situation, the ideal future scenario, and again identify the gaps. You'll also feel great knowing that you have plugged a gap and enhanced your CV in the meantime.

However little or much you follow or implement these ideas, any time you spend thinking, brainstorming, or in any way focussing on ideas about the future and your career will be time well spent. Look to your faculty researcher development office for some career development workshops too- they're a great way to start thinking in this way. It's incredible how little time we spend at work doing this. It can be empowering, self-affirming, and enlightening. Give it a try!

> *"I started the review process and realised I'd forgotten about a lot of my past achievements – the situation wasn't as bleak as I thought! It was empowering to imagine a future scenario and to create a plan of action for getting there. I read this every month to remind me where it's all going."*
>
> **PDRA, EPS**

Grant writing: getting started

Professor Nancy Papalopulu from the Faculty of Life Sciences

Nancy has a Wellcome Trust Senior Research Fellowship, and strongly encourages and supports her postdoctoral researchers to write grant applications. We asked Nancy for her advice.

What do you need to make a grant application successful?

1. Once you know the big question, the next step is to take the complex problem and reduce it to a series of simple questions that one can address
2. Make a summary of your proposal (the series of simple questions) and then the writing will progress
3. You also need to learn to choose the right funding body and look for deadlines dates in advance
4. Writing a grant needs to be planned carefully. The key is timing: your output has to be there at the next grant assessment
5. Collaborations are very important for your proposal
6. Discussing your ideas with others helps to build it up. The give and take of ideas is the basis of generating a good project

Grant writing: baby steps

1. Applying for small funds such as a travel bursary is a great way of familiarising yourself with the basics of applying for funding and can be added to your CV.
2. Collaborating on a grant application, even if it's just within your group, will help the writing process.
3. If your boss has a grant application in preparation, ask to help write a section, or even just review it to understand the process involved.

Resources:
http://www.researchfundingtoolkit.org
http://theresearchwhisperer.wordpress.com/category/apply-for-funding/
http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2013/apr/19/tips-successful-research-grant-funding

The chemistry of collaboration

Forging new collaborations is a vital component of a successful research career. This is evident in the publications we read and the grant applications we submit, which are rarely dependent on the endeavours of just one person. The advantages of collaboration are numerous: broader expertise and sharing resources, which can give your research the cutting edge for publication, not to mention more support and more researchers working towards common goals. But the prospect of setting up a new collaboration can be a daunting one, particularly when you're in the earlier stages of your career where you might be uncertain as to how best to proceed.

DO:

- Do get out of your comfort zone: give talks, attend conferences
- Do empathise with your collaborator, and consider what's in it for them. Be sympathetic to the way they see things
- Do believe in web presence, update web contact details, but remember that talking to people directly is far more meaningful
- Do stick to what you're good at in collaboration

DON'T:

- Don't be intimidated by rank; get chatting to senior people at meetings
- Don't just create a LinkedIn page and hope your collaborators will find you. 30 minutes of face time is more memorable than 30 minutes of email discussion.
- Don't expect your collaboration to be one-sided
- Don't be unrealistic about what you can achieve in collaboration. Create clear and realistic goals, and a division of labour.

Pimp your CV: practical ways to progress your career

Arrange a Performance and Development Review (PDR)

The PDR is a meeting with someone more senior, often your line manager, to discuss your progress and make plans for your career. They can be very useful! You should have one every year and use it to make plans for training, finding a mentor, and planning what you need to achieve in your work to make progress. Ask your manager about arranging a PDR.

Find a professional mentor

Find someone more senior than you who has a career path you would like to follow, and ask them if they would be your mentor. Discuss who to choose and how to go about this with your manager if you are unsure. How the mentoring will work needs negotiation – it could be a few meetings a year to discuss your progress in general, or be about some specific aspect of your job role.

Do training

There is training for teaching, management, time management, statistics packages, grant writing, academic writing etc. at the university and many other training opportunities outside.

Each faculty has training events, and the library, IT services and others organisations also offer training. You can also argue that anything that teaches you something new for your job and career can be seen as training – could you arrange to do a guest lecture to improve your CV?

End of contract and redeployment

In the last 4 months of your contract, you are eligible to apply for jobs at the university as a redeployee. Many jobs are advertised for 'redeployees only' in their first week, and after that more widely. As a redeployee, you can approach the person doing the hiring to ask for an interview not just in the first week but at any point until they have offered the job to someone else. Contact HR for more information about redeployment. Find 'redeployee only' jobs by looking at jobs on **Staffnet> Employment> Job Opportunities**. For research jobs outside the university, see www.jobs.ac.uk or the job pages for other universities or companies.

Attend, give and run seminars

There are many seminars at the University to attend. Offer to give a presentation at your department to get yourself and your work known. Offer to help run your local seminar series next year, as this looks good on your CV and is good experience. You will raise your profile as you liaise with colleagues to organise speakers, host the event and perhaps a meal for colleagues and the speaker afterwards.

Attend work social events

Spend time with your colleagues. Talk to colleagues in the kitchen and go to work meals, socials and cake breaks or arrange some yourself. This gives you the chance to chat to colleagues away from the office or lab, and you will learn a lot! This will help to keep you in the loop about what is going on in your department.

Join the Research Staff Association

Join the UoM RSA which organises talks about matters of interest to researchers and socials where you can meet researchers from outside your research group. Volunteers are welcome to help run the RSA. **www.manchester.ac.uk/rsa**

Ruchi Gupta: RAE Enterprise Fellow (EPS)

Ruchi Gupta is a Royal Academy of Engineering (RAE) Enterprise Fellow in EPS who is also part of the '50 under 30' initiative that is bringing together young researchers in academia and industry to develop strategies for how the two can work together more efficiently in the future.

I did my undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (named as the 8th best university in the Times' top 100 universities under 50 years old list). I was always eager to use my foundations in Electrical Engineering for novel applications in different disciplines, which first took me to McMaster University in Canada for my Masters degree, and then to Manchester for my PhD in the schools of EEE and CEAS. My PhD brought all my previous experience together with research focused on developing microfluid-based sensors for biofuels, which was partly funded by Syngenta. These techniques are used for biological research and drug discovery. A series of short-term post-doctoral positions then allowed me to apply for fellowships, and I gained my RAE Enterprise Fellowship in February 2013. My research has now expanded to integrating optical sensors into the microfluid instrumentation.

What is the '50 under 30' scheme, and how did it come about?

It's a group of researchers from academia and industry focused on developing strategies to improve the connection between universities and the private sector here in the UK, as well as identifying the key attributes required in future leaders. As part of my fellowship application, I required a small contribution of funding from the faculty. I approached the Dean about this, and when my fellowship application went through, the Dean then asked me to join the initiative, which is organised by the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE). My Enterprise fellowship is geared towards starting a spin-off company linked to my current and past research, so I'm ideally placed to contribute to this group.

What do you think are the problems with academic-industry links at the moment?

There is too much focus on short-term goals, which manifests in different ways. Obviously PDRAs typically have to navigate through several short-term contracts like I did, so it's part of the research culture in a way. However, establishing good industrial links requires more of a long-term vision, and long-term commitments both with developing and manufacturing products as well as continuing research and development.

What has your experience of short-term PDRA contracts been?

Busy and stressful, as I'm sure most PDRAs can understand! I had a 6-month contract, followed by a 3-month one, and then another 6-month contract. The anxiety of short-term contracts is all the more for me since my visa is linked to my having a contract. I may be forced to leave the country if a contract expires without having another one in place.

How did you cope during your short-term PDRA contracts?

It was difficult to manage my time and my day-to-day activities. After a few months I started the process of applying for fellowships, which is a slow process taking a minimum of 9 months. You have to be very resilient. During my second contract I applied for a fellowship but it was unfortunately rejected. You have to move onto the next application and not let it get you down. For me, it is the commitment and passion I have for my research that has helped me get through that period. Yes, it's tiring, and your time is at a premium, but if you have a strong internal motivation fuelled by a passion for your research, it is achievable.

What helped you develop your long-term vision?

During my PhD I got involved in several business and enterprise schemes. I won awards from Venture Out and Venture Further here at Manchester, and also won a prize as part of the Virgin Media Pioneers programme. I participated in many more similar schemes, and was given the time to do this outside of my PhD work. So I've been thinking about and developing business plans since 2010. The great thing about being involved in these activities is that they helped me develop my ideas, build new connections and gain experience. This meant that when I started several short-term PDRA positions I had a strong idea of where I wanted to go.

Given your experience with fellowship applications, what advice could you give to other PDRAs?

Looking back at my first failed application, I now realise it was not as good as it could have been. After that disappointment, I attended several of the University workshops on fellowships. These are incredibly helpful, giving lots of useful tips, as well as helping you find out who to contact and ask for help. PDRAs also need to understand that different schools may have different attitudes towards funding, in that some schools are keen to support fellowship applications by committing to provide some of the funding, whereas others may not be as flexible. If your school is not, it may be possible to develop a link with another school that is more supportive in this way. Finally, and most importantly, I had a very supportive supervisor. Most funding applications need to include a permanent academic, so having a member of staff who will support you through the process is very important.

How important is it to differentiate yourself from your supervisor?

I think it's very important. I don't believe it's absolutely necessary to work on different research projects in collaboration with a different group or university, but you definitely have to have a long-term vision that takes your research in a unique direction. Clearly, if you apply to work in a similar way to an existing academic, it is more difficult to justify why you should get the funding.

Where do you see yourself being in 10 years?

I hope to have developed a spin-off company, making already-established products as well as continuing with research and development. I therefore hope to have a permanent academic position and to be building my own research group.

Dr. Simon Clark (MHS): MRC Fellow

I am currently a MRC Career Development Fellow in the Institute of Human Development at the FMHS. As a Fellow I investigate the role of innate immunity regulation in diseases, such as age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the leading cause of blindness in the western world.

I started my career with a B.Sc. in Biochemistry at the University of Aberdeen in 2002, after which I spent a year working in industry on the development of diagnostic tests for cardiovascular disease. I began my D.Phil. at Oxford in 2003 where I investigated the interaction of an innate immune regulator with endogenous sugar molecules as a mechanism for host recognition. In 2006, I moved to the Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Manchester, where I was able to further investigate the regulation of innate immunity on extracellular matrices. In order to build my career further I applied for the Stepping Stone Fellowship which I was granted in 2012. The Stepping Stone Fellowship was the basis for my successful application for an MRC Career Development Award earlier this year and I am now actively recruiting and building up my research team.

When you started your career, did you have any long-term career goal strategies?

In the beginning I didn't have clear strategies, but I knew that I enjoyed research and that I wanted to continue in academia. I also got a lot of guidance from supervisors/mentors, like Dr. Robert Sim (Oxford) and Prof. Tony Day (Manchester), and learned that if you want a career in academia and want to eventually conduct your own research you will have to aim for grant applications.

Did you get help/mentorship on how to set certain goals?

I was fortunate to get a lot of advice from my supervisors and from colleagues. In fact because of Prof. Paul Bishop (FMHS) I was made aware of the Stepping Stone Award. I also learned that to achieve goals you have to plan ahead: in the first year of your post-doc you should already think about next steps and try to consciously work on improving your CV.

Do you have any tips on how to make your CV more competitive?

Personally, I think it is important to make sure you have a rounded CV, and that you don't focus on just one thing. If it's not possible for you to publish a lot make sure you improve your CV otherwise. For instance, giving talks at international meetings, getting involved in grant applications even if you're only contributing a relatively small part, or by visiting another lab abroad and by having collaborations (which is also a good way to increase the amount of publications you have). Also, don't be afraid to ask for help: get out of your comfort zone and ask senior researchers for advice. Having worked at several universities, I believe that the University of Manchester is by far the most supportive in grant writing and improving your CV. For instance, several workshops are being offered to help you with your CV. Also, FMHS now has the Faculty Fellowship Academy, which consists of highly motivated people that are there to advise you on grant applications.

How do you make sure you fit everything in to your busy schedule?

I try to be aware of deadlines, whether it is giving a talk or finishing a paper, I plan my time by working backwards from the deadline. I also make time for my family, but that invariably means that sometimes I do have to work late hours at home as well.

How far ahead do you think in terms of your next career steps?

I don't overthink my next steps, but when writing a grant I always try to think/plan just ahead of the end of the grant. That way I can already start preparing for this. For instance, I am aware that my next step will be to apply for a Senior Fellowship, and I will start preparing my next application 2 years before the end of my current fellowship.

Dr. Helena Bailes (FLS): Lecturer in Neuroscience and Biomedical Science

Following my research career, I have recently become a teaching lecturer in FLS. But how did I get here? And what advice would I give to anyone interested in making a similar move?

As I embarked on my third postdoc position more than a year ago I found myself considering the recurring questions in my head common to most postdocs: what will I do next? What happens at the end of this grant? Could I get a fellowship… do I even want one? I loved being immersed in lab-based research and the thought of not setting up another assay struck me as daunting. Yet equally there were other aspects of my role that I realised I enjoyed. Perhaps as scientists these roles are not recognised as the transferable skills that they are. For example, high standards of administrative and data analysis skills, writing articles for a variety of audiences, and teaching colleagues and students. I started to think about these other attributes and how I could put these to use in any future job.

I have had a variety of teaching experience from the beginning of my PhD onwards and decided a few years ago that I would love to get as much additional experience as possible in this field - to decide if it was the path for me, but also if I would be up to the job (I'm still working on that one!). My first dabble in teaching was when I was doing my PhD, and I worked as a demonstrator, it was more for the money than anything else, but it did show me that it could be fun. I then became a postdoc at Manchester and participated in the tutorial mentoring program, which I found to be a useful insight into teaching small groups. Outside of University I also helped with a few schools workshops with the STEM scheme run through the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI). I then had a small epiphany and realised University teaching is a great way to keep up with the latest advances in research while also trying to inspire young minds to love biology. Earlier this year I saw a position advertised for a teaching-focussed lecturer in Neuroscience and Biomedical Science in FLS and applied. I started my position in December 2013 and I'm looking forward to the upcoming teaching semester.

My main advice for anyone who is interested in higher education teaching as a career would be to just have a go. Every year there are more and more opportunities for teaching experiences in FLS, such as tutorial mentoring, practical and small group teaching programs. Most postdocs have helped supervise undergraduate and perhaps postgraduate students in their lab projects. Consider your involvement, and perhaps how you could be a more effective teacher in a lab environment. Try giving students constructive feedback about a phase of their project and perhaps ask your PI for feedback on your teaching techniques as well. It does help to have a PI who is supportive of you pursuing extra activities/workshops outside of lab work, in which I was very fortunate.

Gaining as much experience as possible will help bolster your CV whether you finally choose a career in teaching or not, but will also really help you to decide if you have a passion for it. I am really excited to be starting a new path this year but also thankful for the experience and skills that my years in research have given me.

Professor Bill Deakin (MHS): Director

I am Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the Neuroscience and Psychiatry Unit at the FMHS.

I graduated in Medicine at Leeds University in 1973 and did an extra year in my training to obtain a 1st in Physiology. This excited my interest in neurobiology and the organisation of behaviour. I specialised in Psychiatry and joined the Clinical Research Centre at Northwick Park, London, to further my training and work on my PhD at the National Institute for Medical Research, Mill Hill. I was a MRC Training Fellow for 5 years. My PhD investigated how distinct 5HT (serotonin) neuron pathways in the rat brain have different functions in regulating adaptive, coping responses to stress.

I moved to the University of Manchester as Senior Lecturer in the early 1980s to continue 5HT research but in clinical experimental medicine with volunteers and patients with depression, anxiety and antisocial behaviour. Soon afterwards I received my first R&D grant, and had the basis to form my research group which started with one junior clinical researcher. Nowadays this group consists of psychiatrists, psychologists and researchers who identify brain mechanisms which underlie common mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and depression. More recently we have developed novel magnetic resonance imaging methods to track the action of drugs in the brain such as the glutamate antagonist ketamine. We are very keen to find better treatments for mental illness. Currently I am investigating how the antibiotic minocycline improved the outcome of treatment for schizophrenia in our clinical trial.

When you started as a medical undergraduate, did you already have a clear view of your career goals?

During my medical undergraduate years I studied physiology and learned how the brain encodes information about touch. This got me interested in the function of the central nervous system (CNS), and after further reading Eysenck's book on the biological basis of personality I knew I wanted to study biological psychiatry and to do research. Even though I was advised to first obtain Membership exams at the Royal College of Physicians for 3 years, I knew I wanted to do psychiatry research so I got on with it and went straight into a research unit.

Did you have certain strategies to move towards goals?

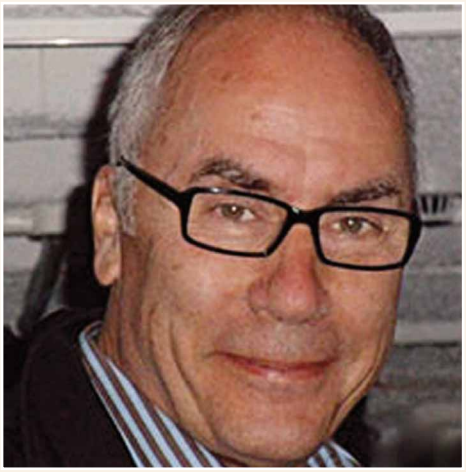
I started by writing to Hans Eysenck, explaining him that I was interested in biological psychiatry. I asked him how I might proceed and he pointed out that he was a psychologist and wished me well in psychiatry! I wrote to Max Hamilton (famous for inventing the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale), who in turn suggested to contact Tim Crow. At that time Tim was setting up a unit at Northwick Park hospital in London, and when I was visiting him it turned out he was interviewing people for a post. He invited me to join in and I got the post! He was my role model and mentor for science, psychiatry, and how to write papers, grants and reports. His career advice was invaluable. During that time there were only MRC grants available so I wrote a training fellowship application while working as a psychiatric trainee.

What possibilities have changed for young scientists in comparison with when you started your career?

When I started, the chances of receiving a fellowship were much higher because there was less competition; only about 3% of the population went to University, so also fewer postgraduates were applying for grants. The standards nowadays are definitely higher, but the schemes for academics are clearer as well. Academia is more organised and there are more funding possibilities. There are more associations that encourage young researchers to develop their career, such as the BAP and ECNP in the field of psychopharmacology. There are also young scientists committees in societies and starter grant fellowships from the EU.

What are you looking for when considering someone for a position or promotion?

Most important for me is enthusiasm for science. You can normally see this enthusiasm in candidates from evidence of initiative, by them being self-motivated and having an identified area of interest.



Do you have any tips on how to prepare for the next step in a young scientists career?

It is important to go to meetings and conferences and see the big names in your scientific area, hear about their research, and to read literature. This way you get inspired and learn more about where your own research interests lie. Also, identify the group you want to go to, go abroad and find the best group to gain more experience. As a postdoc it is important to write, you must publish. Hold the next step until you publish, and publish in the best possible journals. It is better to accumulate data and write a high quality paper than to 'salami-slice' your data for lower quality articles. Don't forget to keep important data silent until you have published it.

Persistence is also very important: ask groups if you can visit them, volunteer for research and ask for jobs in the group that is best for your research, don't wait for vacancies. Present and attend meetings so that the research community knows you, and also so you gain inspiration for what you want to do next.

Meet the new Incite editor: Sarah King-Hele

Sarah King-Hele is a PDRA based at the Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research in the Faculty of Humanities. She works for the UK Data Service providing user support and training for the many survey datasets available for researchers to download and use via the service's website (ukdataservice.ac.uk). Sarah is also a member of the organising committee for the Research Staff Association at the University of Manchester. As an Editor of Incite, Sarah is looking forward to helping produce interesting and informative articles to help researchers further their careers.

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Are we covering the issues you want to read about?

- Who would you really like to hear from in our Q&A slot?
- Could you write a short article about your experiences or opinions to feature in *Incite*?
- Have you been to any interesting conferences or heard any research news that you would like to see highlighted?

We would like to expand *Incite*, 'the research newsletter written for you, by you,' so we would like to hear from you regarding issues that you'd like to see covered. Even if you don't want to write a whole article, we'd like to hear your ideas about what you'd like to see featured in your Research Staff Skills Training newsletter. We'll make it a priority to follow up your leads and address the topics that are relevant to you, the reader.

We also encourage input from budding journalists wishing to gain writing experience. The style and content of input is open to experimentation as we would like Incite to be led by, and respond to, our community's needs. You

may want to discuss funding issues, managing your research manager/collaborators, the dilemmas of fixed term contract research, or you may like to write a gonzo-style conference report.

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Incite also has a blog; check us out at: www.manchesterincite.wordpress.com

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