Life as an STFC Advanced Fellow

J. D. Nichols
@jonny_nichols
First of all...

Congratulations on obtaining your Fellowship! - a wonderful and prestigious opportunity
My background

2001-2004  PhD, University of Leicester
2004-2011  PDRA, Leicester, Boston University
2011-2016  STFC Advanced Fellow, Leicester
2013-2016  Lecturer, Leicester
2016-      Reader (≡ Associate Professor)

Magnetospheres and auroras of the outer planets, exoplanets and ultra cool dwarfs
Institutional support

Generic “new staff” induction if appropriate

Mentor - ask for one if not offered already

Researcher development support
Most (all?) institutions will have some form of researcher development support - make use of this.
Institutional support

Research and Enterprise Division

Concordat for the Career Development of Researchers: Implementation

The University of Leicester has taken a number of concrete steps to implement the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, and review of progress against the Concordat Action Plan is now firmly embedded within core structures and practices. The University was awarded the European Commission ‘HR Excellence in Research’ award in recognition of its commitment to its 2011-2013 and 2013-2015 Action Plans.

Over January-August 2015 the University conducted an internal review of current provision against the principles of the Concordat. The internal review process went through the following steps:

1. The Concordat Steering Group coordinated processes to evaluate progress against the 2013-15 Action Plan;
2. Results from CROS 2015 and PIIRS 2015 were used to inform both the evaluation of progress thus far, and future needs that need to be taken over the next two years;
3. The annual Research Staff Forum this year, entitled ‘Empowering and Inviting in our Researchers through the Concordat’, held on Friday, 12 June 2015, focused on the seven principles underpinning the Concordat, and was organised in a world café format to elicit research staff views on what has been working well, what needed improvement, and soliciting concrete suggestions for future action.
4. As part of the overall organisational review at Leicester, a Strategic Task and Finish Group on Developing and Enhancing Careers was set up in January 2015; there is an on-going review of key areas of significance to the Concordat, in particular, appraisal, reward and recognition, mentoring, leadership.

Progress is monitored by the Concordat Steering Group, which meets three times per academic year and reports to the Research Policy Committee. It is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise, and membership comprises a member of academic and research staff from each of the three Colleges – Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities (CSSAH), Medicine, Biological Sciences and Psychology (MBSP), and Science and...
External CPD* support

*Continuing professional development

- **Residential Communication and Media Skills**
  Residential course combining training in written communication and media skills.

- **Writing about your research**
  Learn to write about your research for non-specialist readers in a variety of contexts.

- **Media skills training**
  Develop skills in working with television, radio, newspapers and other media.
Some personal tips

Some teaching can be useful!
Good for...the CV
your research
the soul

Beware, too much at this stage is bad for...
the CV
your research
the soul

Maximum 260 h /yr
Some personal tips

Yes, you **can** say “no!”

…even if you have converted the ERF to a lectureship.

Institutions are sticklers for adhering to contracts… But a new academic is a tempting target for unpopular administrative and teaching jobs in the Department.
Some personal tips

Don’t sit in a bubble

- Attend CPD courses
- Build and maintain networks with colleagues
  - starting with this group!
- Many of us get imposter syndrome - don’t let it hold you back from applying for jobs (more on this later)
- Regularly reflect on your progress relative to your research proposal.
  - I would be surprised if your research plan stays static for 5 years
Career opportunities

Lectureships:

- Congratulations! You’ve just landed the best bargaining chip for a permanent academic position that you’re ever likely to get!

- But don’t assume that this will be in your current institution.
  (n.b. not in Year 1, subject to STFC approval)
Career opportunities

- You are presently highly employable
- 5 years goes fast. Your capital dwindles.
- Be pro-active
- Keep an eye on your (and related) field’s mailing lists
- A lectureship is a **different job**
  - be prepared for a shock
  - primarily teaching and administration
  - (<0.4 FTE research is typical)

Remember… there is life outside academia
Other funding opportunities

STFC - e.g. public engagement small awards

The Royal Society - training

ERC - post ERF consolidator grants

Leverhulme Trust - Phillip Leverhulme Prizes (nominated)

Internal funding - e.g. studentships

RAS - e.g. travel funding
Summary

- Your Fellowship is a wonderful opportunity - use it wisely
- Don’t sit in a bubble for 5 years - keep developing as a researcher and as an academic
- Engage with your mentor, as well as internal and external CPD courses - they are all useful!
- Reflect on your development as a researcher
- Apply for all the lectureships - be flexible
- Remember to stay in control of your workload
- Be prepared for the transition to a lectureship - this is primarily a teaching and administrative role
Best of luck for the future!