

Fellowship Skills and Life after a Fellowship

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Congratulations on having obtained a fellowship!

- ❖ A bit about me
- ❖ Academic career
- ❖ Some experiences

Note that my remarks are mostly how I perceived things, experiences by other fellows will most likely differ somewhat (or a lot)!

A bit about me:

- Undergraduate and PhD: Utrecht University (NL) 1990-1999
- Postdoc Heidelberg University (DE) 1999-2001
- Postdoc Ohio State University (USA) 2001-2004
- PPARC/STFC Advanced Fellow (Swansea) 2004-2009

Research in theoretical particle physics:

- Quantum fields/QCD under extreme conditions
- Thermal and non-equilibrium field theory
- Lattice gauge theory
- ...

Academic career

From fellow to lecturer to professor:

- ❖ Typically, no-one will ask you whether you would like a job or apply for promotion
- ❖ The initiative will have to come from you! This is daunting! But you will learn...

In my case:

another Advanced Fellow was paving the way. I just followed in his tracks... and I have learnt (clearly a transferable skill 😊)

Academic career

- In Swansea an ERF/URF is converted into a lectureship immediately
- If not: negotiate! This will depend on the institution, but remember that you bring research funding and salary for 5 years...
- 5 years is a long time
- People with 'power' (Head of Dept, Head of Sciences, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, etc) may move on
- Try to act quite quickly and have it written down

My academic career

- ✓ 2004-2007: lecturer (with immediate limited teaching)
- ✓ 2007-2009: senior lecturer (taking on more admin roles)
- ✓ 2009-2011: reader
- ✓ 2011-now: professor
- ✓ 2013-2015: Leverhulme Research fellow
- ✓ 2013-2018: Royal Society Wolfson Research Merit Award
- ✓ 2017-now: PI and group leader of Particle Physics Theory Group

How to develop yourself

- Find a mentor, i.e. someone you trust, is a friend, you can discuss anything with, including doubts and frustration

If you have secured/have the possibility to secure a permanent post:

- Teach and become part of the staff in the Department
- Take on minor admin roles

This will improve your life! You are no longer a postdoc! You are faculty!

How to develop yourself

- Do research !!
- Develop your own research programme: “future research leader”
- But also adapt to what is going on in the Department
- Be open-minded and flexible
- Opportunities to apply for grants, e.g. collaboratively, will increase your visibility and enhance your cv
- When you apply e.g. for promotion, the committee will look at the overall picture, including teaching, admin, research
- Your ERF grant is a major boost, but there are more boxes to tick

How to develop yourself

You will be invited/have the opportunity to:

- Review (publications, research proposals, fellowship proposals)
- Join panels
- Organise meetings and workshops
- Make decisions about other people, e.g. other researchers and students (!)

All of these are nerve-wrecking at first, but you'll grow into it... eventually!

My view on this

- I actually enjoy these things and I hardly ever say no... 🤔
- Hence I have organised approximately one meeting/year since 2012 (and it does indeed get easier)
- Currently Chair of Scientific Board of ECT* in Trento (IT) and on the Joint Scientific Council of FAIR/GSI (DE) and on the Management Committee of COST-THOR network (EU) and on the Skills and Engagement Advisory Board of STFC...

But this is very personal, some people do not like these activities...

My advice is not to say “no” too quickly

How to develop your research

- ❖ Someone (my mentor in fact) told me some time ago that a good researcher changes direction every 5-7 years
- ❖ Looking back, my experience is consistent with this (silently assuming I am a 'good' researcher here...)
- ❖ But it happened by itself, i.e. subconsciously and naturally
- ❖ Hence don't force it upon yourself
- ❖ But it is an interesting thought to keep in the back of your mind...

That's it!

- ✓ Enjoy the Fellowship
- ✓ Work on the next stage of your career
- ✓ Transition from postdoc to faculty member
- ✓ Do excellent science!