



PdOC guide to finding a Postdoc job

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Introduction

This guide is intended for final year PhD students who might be thinking about applying for postdoctoral positions in the near future, as well as existing postdocs who may be coming to the end of a contract and may wish to start looking for a new post or even start thinking about founding their own research group.

This is intended as a starting point. While trying to be fairly comprehensive it is obviously not feasible to list every possible postdoc/fellowship available. It's also worth noting that some opportunities are not available annually and some are not widely advertised. You will probably have to do a lot of searching yourself but there is a wealth of information out there if you do a little digging.

Before you start looking you may wish to read "*Enhancing the Postdoctoral Experience for Scientists and Engineers: A Guide for Postdoctoral Scholars, Advisers, Institutions, Funding Organizations, and Disciplinary Societies*", which is available online at <http://www.nap.edu/books/0309069963/html> and sheds light on many of the problems that postdocs have encountered in the past and, to a considerable extent, still face now.

If you feel there is incorrect/out of data of missing information anywhere in this report please e-mail the details to soc-pdoc-committee@lists.cam.ac.uk and we will endeavour to include/correct it.

Section A – Websites

Please note that while this list is hopefully reasonably comprehensive, it is not exhaustive. You may be able to find more information on through search engines such as Google or Yahoo.

1) <http://www.jobs.ac.uk/>

This is a big website which lists many different types of academic jobs throughout the UK, and often abroad as well. You can search by a variety of factors such as type of job, keyword, area of interest etc. It's very good and includes a lot of postdoc jobs, I found my job on here and you can also set up regular e-mail updates of new jobs that match your search criteria.

2) <http://www.tedjob.com>

Tedjob is an abbreviation of **top higher-education job**. I have not used this site but it lists postdoc jobs as well as other positions in a wide range of universities and colleges. It lists available jobs by country and you can also post your CV online for potential employers to have a look at. Overall, although slightly U.S. biased, it seems to be quite a good higher education job internet marketplace.

3) <http://www.newscientistjobs.com> and <http://www.sciencejobs.com/>

These are essentially the same site under two different names and the jobs listed here come from New Scientist magazine. It's very comprehensive and covers a wide geographic area, so you will probably need to filter the results by location, type etc. It covers all types of science related jobs, not just postdocs, but that being said it does carry a lot of the latter and you can set up regular e-mail updates that match your search criteria. You can also use the CV database option to put your CV online for recruiters to see.

4) <http://www.nature.com/naturejobs/index.html>

This is a similar kind of site to the New Scientist one listed above but from Nature. It can be a bit biased towards US postdocs but has a large selection none the less.

5) <http://aaas.sciencecareers.org/js.php>

Science Careers is the job site from 'Science' magazine. Quite U.S. focused but it also has a career development section called "Science's Next Wave" (see below).

6) http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_development/

Science's Next Wave claims to be the oldest science career magazine on the web and again, it is published by the journal 'Science'. I haven't used it much but it seems to be pretty comprehensive and you may well find it very useful for hints and tips, general advice and background information on managing your postdoc job hunt and your academic career.

7) <http://www.totaljobs.com/>, <http://www.monster.co.uk/>, <http://www.careerbuilder.co.uk>

These are more general sites, similar to jobs.ac.uk but not restricted to academic jobs. They do have a science sections though and if you are prepared to dig around a bit you should find some relevant adverts.

8) <http://www.findapostdoc.com>

A job site dedicated to postdoc positions, you can search by area, type etc however, it does not carry a large number of advertisements. This site is run by the same team who brought you <http://www.findamasters.com> and <http://www.findaphd.com>.

9) <http://www.emedcareers.co.uk/>

This is an example of a specialist site. These are usually similar to jobs.ac.uk but specific to a particular field, in this case just for Pharmaceutical, Clinical Research, Medical and Sales jobs across the UK. You can usually find these sorts of site through Google or other search engines.

10) <http://www.thesjobs.co.uk/> and <http://jobs.guardian.co.uk/>

The job websites of the Times Higher Educational Supplement and the Guardian Newspaper respectively. Not as specialised as some of the sites mentioned above but worth having a look at nonetheless.

11) <http://www.careers.cam.ac.uk/>

The University Careers service is situated at Stuart House on Mill Lane. It provides a range of services, such as mock interviews, CV appraisal and composition and it also organizes presentations, workshops and seminars with a huge range of employers, including many leading companies in a variety of fields. If you are a PhD student in Cambridge they will almost certainly be able to help you in the search for a postdoctoral position.

In the past, the careers service was not available to postdocs. However, Dr. Anne Forde was recently appointed as the careers adviser for life science contract research staff. She can be contacted via 01223 765 771 and AnneForde@careers.cam.ac.uk. Rumour has it that more people will be appointed in the careers office to deal with postdocs from other departments in the very near future so be sure to check the postdoc specific part of the careers office site at <http://www.careers.cam.ac.uk/pdoc/pdocportal.asp> for the latest information.

12) <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/personnel/jobs/>,
<http://www.rsd.cam.ac.uk/staff/finding/bulletins/archive/> and <http://www.ResearchResearch.com>

Related to site 11, the first site lists all vacancies within the University of Cambridge. The second is the site of the research services division of Cambridge University and lists funding opportunities available there. The third site is similar but lists funding opportunities available of a wide geographical area and is more comprehensive.

13) http://www.postdoctank.com/user_index.php

This is a US based dedicated job placement website for post-doc positions. They don't take your CV. Instead, all you do is to answer 20 questions to characterize your interest and capability. Employers will contact you directly if your profile gets their interest.

14) <http://www.setac.org/htdocs/careercenter.html>

Professional bodies, such as the Society for Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) or the Royal Society of Chemistry (<http://www.rsc.org>) will often have a dedicated careers page where you may be able to find information on postdoc jobs and how to find them. The example given here is for SETAC but a simple search online should reveal if there is a society more matched to your area of interest and whether or not they have advice and/or funding available.

15) <http://www.cambridgenetwork.co.uk/>

As the name suggests this is more of a networking site than a job listings area. It is dedicated to the Cambridge area and may be useful.

Section B – Universities

If the above don't lead to anything you could try going directly to the website of the University department you are interested in and looking through the details of the research groups there. If you find one that matches your research interests, you can e-mail them directly to ask about the possibility of working there and the funding opportunities available. I'm told this works quite well for American Universities.

Also, make good use of any contacts you may have in your field of interest. Networking is very important in academia and, as with many industries, who you know can be as important as what you know. Don't be afraid to ask around at conferences, or ask your supervisor if they have any contacts he/she could talk to on your behalf. You might be surprised how many people get jobs this way.

Section C – Industry

Industry funded postdocs can be even more competitive than University based ones and indeed they are often run in collaboration with a university so you can spend most of your time in a university lab and only a few days a month at the companies main site.

I've never worked with industry I'm afraid so I don't know much more about how this works. The best thing to do is probably to look at the websites of some of the big companies to see if they have openings or contact individual companies that you might be interested in via e-mail with a copy of your CV etc. Again, don't forget to check any contacts you might have.

Section D – Fellowships

Much 'though it pains us to reveal secrets to the competition (i.e. all of you), you may also find applying to fellowships of use for postdoc work, or even founding your own research group. Those listed below are some of the most well known, they are very competitive but tend to come up every year or so. There will also be others advertised periodically as well, for example Wellcome Trust fellowships. The New Scientist and Google websites are particularly good places to find the latter, just put '*fellowship*' or '*university fellowship*' in the search box and away you go.

The Science Next wave website also lists several UK fellowships. Although most are specifically aimed at researchers who already have quite a bit of postdoc experience and may even be at the stage they want to set up their own lab. The specific webpage can be seen at

http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_development/previous_issues/articles/3500/funding_for_independence_find_a_fellowship

The fledgling National Research Staff Association of the UK website at <http://scratchpad.wikia.com/wiki/NationalpostdocUK> and the related <http://postbloggery.blogspot.com/> has some good tips for how to fill in (and how not to fill in) fellowship application forms. The European equivalent, Eurodoc, may also be of interest (see <http://www.eurodoc.net/> for more information).

Institutional Fellowships

The Royal Society award University Research Fellowships to outstanding scientists with the opportunity to build an independent research career. Those appointed are expected to be strong candidates for permanent posts in universities at the end of their fellowships. Please check their website at <http://www.royalsoc.ac.uk/> to see if the scheme is running.

The Royal Society of Edinburgh also sometimes has fellowships available in a similar vein to those from the Royal Society. Please check the website at http://www.royalsoced.org.uk/research_fellowships/ for details.

You may also wish to try the Royal Institution of Great Britain, They have a lot of information but I'm not sure that they award funding themselves. Their website can be found at <http://www.rigb.org/rimain/index.jsp>

Humanities based people could try the British Academy (the national academy for the humanities and the social sciences) for funding. I'm afraid that, as a scientist, I don't know much about this but information can be found on the web at <http://www.britac.ac.uk/funding/index.html> Several of the UK Research Councils (see below) are also of relevance. You can also talk to organisations such as the Leverhulme Trust (<http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/>) the British Federation of Women Graduates (<http://www.bfwg.org.uk/>).

Research Council Career Development Fellowships

The research councils sometimes have fellowships similar to those offered by the Royal Society. Again they are to enable outstanding scientists to undertake research, develop their research careers, and produce work of international importance. Please go <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/> and follow the links to specific councils via the list on left hand column for more information.

Research Council Academic Fellowships

Related to the above awards the Academic Fellowship is a 5 year program aimed at smoothing the transition from postdoc to lecturer. RCUK is allocating funding to universities so you need to check universities web site and the job sites mentioned earlier. Fellows will be expected to take on teaching duties bit by bit but can spend the majority of the earlier years pursuing their own independent research. At the end of the 5 years

academic fellows should be offered a faculty position, subject to a probationary period. Background information can be found at <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/acfellow/>.

European Research Council fellowships

At the time of writing the New European Research Council (ERC), of the European Union has only just been formed and competition for what seems to be a Europe-wide equivalent of the Royal Society fellowships described above has not yet opened, although it should do soon. The homepage is at http://erc.europa.eu/index_en.cfm and the draft specifications for the young investigator award can be seen at http://www.efmsts.org/Portals/0/pdf/sir-grant-strategy_en.pdf.

Marie Curie fellowships

These fellowships are for early stage researchers in EU or Associated States to provide early-stage researchers of any nationality or age with structured scientific or technological training opportunities of between three months to three years. Many industrial postdocs are funded by Marie Curie fellowships. Information may be found online at http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp6/mariecurie-actions/action/stage_en.html.

European Science Foundation's EURYI award

The European Science Foundation's EURYI award (<http://www.esf.org/>) is in a similar vein to the above. The only potential downside is that rumour has it that the UK Research Councils are not supporting it this year (2006) so if were successful in getting an award you may have to go elsewhere in Europe.

Oxbridge College Research Fellowships

Many Cambridge and Oxford Colleges have what are called Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) competitions every year. These are not attached to a particular project and so you usually have to come up with your own, but this does at least give scope for creativity.

These posts could be seen as an alternative to a normal postdoc position but Ph.D. students in their last year usually also qualify. Junior Research Fellowships (JRFs) usually last for two or three years, and the JRF is paid by (and may sometimes live and work in) the College. The salary is usually considerably lower than for an externally funded postdoc position, but free accommodation and meals can well make up for that. Dining rights (at High Table, if they have one) are usually included and the postdoc will be invited to take part in all college activities. Teaching is optional, but usually up to 6 hours of supervisions per week may be undertaken, with separate payment. Much less is required of a JRF than of a senior fellow.

Adverts for these fellowships are usually shown on the individual Colleges websites. A list of Cambridge College websites may be seen at <http://www.cam.ac.uk/cambuniv/finding/addresses/college.html> and a list of Oxford Colleges is at <http://www.ox.ac.uk/colleges/>. JRFs are also often advertised in the Cambridge University reporter (even Oxford jobs are sometimes shown here). This can be seen and searched online at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/>. Posts for the next academic year, i.e. beginning the following October, are advertised any time between late summer and just after Christmas the previous year, so it is well worth planning in advance! 'College Notices' are towards the bottom of each issue of the Reporter, but please note that fellowships are only advertised once - which unfortunately means sifting through all relevant issues! PdOC also tries to include as many of these as possible in our weekly newsletter.

For many Colleges, prospective JRFs should be under the age of 30 and not have spent more than 4 or 5 years in research. For the application, a short research proposal is usually required, along with two or three references which have to be sent in at the time

of application. The majority of awards are made in December, but a few colleges differ in this and make awards in spring.

In case you have not yet met the Reporter, it is a newspaper that is printed by the University. It is used to advertise all vacancies, and also to discuss possible changes in the way the University works. Possible changes are advertised in advance, and all members of the Regent House (employees of the university, including all postdocs) are free to comment on, or object to, the proposals. If few objections are received, then it is assumed that we all approve, and the new rules are implemented

Bear in mind that JRFs are very competitive. While it is not impossible to get one, there will often be hundreds of people chasing every place. It is well worth the effort if you are successful though, since most JRFs have useful perks: for instance you may be offered College accommodation (free or heavily subsidised), a central College office or teaching room, and other privileges usually only available to Senior Fellows.

There are two main types of JRFs, non-stipendiary and stipendiary and, as previously mentioned, you will usually have to apply a year or so in advance for both.

Non-stipendiary JRFs are effectively designed to complement post-doc research posts which are funded externally, so ideal for postdocs who already have their own funding or are paid externally through a research project but not much use if you don't have a postdoc position already. Accommodation is usually offered, or a living-out allowance of about £3000.

Stipendiary JRFs are advertised in most years. To get one you must usually not only come up with your own research proposal but also gain assurances from people in the relevant departments that they will have enough lab space to accommodate you if successful. This is obviously not the easiest thing to do if you are applying from outside the University. Arts and Humanities people usually have a slight advantage in these

competitions since external funding in these areas is generally harder to come by than in the Sciences.

One way you may be able to get an advantage is to teach for a College, or Colleges. Sometimes this means that you may find that doors open more easily. To obtain info on teaching opportunities in a particular College, write to the individual Director of Studies concerned. You should be able to find their personal details listed on the relevant College website. In addition, if you have any contacts in the College that is advertising then it is well worth asking them for any information that they might be able to share with you. This is because the College will usually have a very good idea of the type of person they want to appoint for a particular post and if you can tailor your application accordingly you are likely to stand a better chance.

University Research Fellowships

Many Universities will also offer their own fellowships in similar vein to the above but without the College related sections. Adverts for these can usually be found on the relevant University and/or departmental website. An alphabetical list of universities and colleges in the United Kingdom can be found at

<http://www.scit.wlv.ac.uk/ukinfo/alpha.html>.

We hope that the above is of some help. If you have any other questions please contact us (soc-pdoc-committee@lists.cam.ac.uk) and we will try to answer as soon as possible.

Best regards and good luck in your search for a postdoc

The PdOC team

