Career development for postdocs
A smorgasbord of possibilities

Lund University offers a broad range of activities that contribute in one way or another to career development for academic staff, either within academia or outside it.
Lund University offers a broad range of activities that contribute in one way or another to career development for academic staff, either within academia or outside it.

Q: Are the career development activities only for people employed as postdocs, or can I, as a PhD graduate research engineer/associate senior lecturer/senior lecturer/researcher/assistant researcher also sign up?
A: Of course! In this context, we use postdocs as a collective term for all postdoctoral positions. The vast majority of activities are adapted to staff who completed their PhDs 1-4 years ago.

Q: Are our future careers not in the hands of the funding bodies? If we receive external funding, we get a position at LU – surely nothing you offer can change that?
A: This is true in a sense. But it is important for us that you know what to expect from a career in academia and how you can refine your qualifications portfolio in view of applications and promotions. Plus – are you sure this is where you want to be?

Q: What's this – do you not want to keep us here?
A: Yes of course we do, but only if that's what YOU want. Your career is yours and should not be in our hands or those of the funders. If you know what you are choosing, why and how, then things should work out for all of us.

Q: I am a postdoc (see definition above) working part-time/on approved leave of absence/on parental leave/am scholarship-funded – can I still attend?
A: Absolutely! The only requirement is your ability to prove that you are a postdoctoral employee at LU, i.e. we must be able to find you in LUCAT.

Q: I am a researcher and my position is categorised as technical/administrative (TA) employment. Question 1: Can I sign up for these activities? Question 2: Is there any chance of me being able to have an academic career in Sweden?
A: Answer to question 1: YES! Answer to question 2: Yes, but you must make sure you don’t get stuck in the researcher position for too long. Find an advertised career development position and apply for it! The seminars and workshops in this set-up can help you to refine your application.

Q: But surely my manager is responsible for my professional development? Otherwise, why would the staff appraisals deal with career matters (as well)?
A: It is likely that your manager is best placed to know which conferences you should attend and how you should structure your next talk or your seminar. If you are wondering which networks to join or what funding to apply for, then your manager certainly would be the one with the answers. But how you become an (associate) senior lecturer at your faculty or what jobs are available “out there” – perhaps not. And do you really ask your manager those questions about “what happens next, if we don’t get funding”? Perhaps not. It is impossible for these activities to make things less clear to you. And PS: Do you want to be well-prepared for your staff appraisal with the head of department/assistant head of department, ready to show a career plan worthy of the title? Of course you do.

Q: Why are there activities about careers outside academia? Is this a subtle way of telling me there is no future for me at Lund University?
A: How can you even think that – absolutely not! But here it is not a question of what we want, but what you want. If you see a future at Lund University we will of course be delighted, but before taking that decision, you must really know what you are getting into and whether or not it is a realistic and worthwhile path to follow. Attending the seminars about transferable skills will enable you to know what to exclude and why. And what could become relevant a little later on. This is what we
mean by taking well-informed decisions.

Q: I am not sure whether I have time to attend – it seems as though the workshop I am interested in is right in the middle of a peak in my workload. Should I sign up and hope for the best?
A: Please do not sign up unless you can prioritise the activity when it comes up. Your work will always involve peaks in the workload, to be honest it is unlikely that things will be calmer the next time the activity is offered. But having said this:

Q: If I don’t have time to attend a workshop this semester, have I missed my chance?
A: All activities are recurrent, so if you miss one, you can always put yourself on a waiting list for the next one.

Q: What if I have signed up and it turns out I don’t have time to attend?
A: That is unfortunate, as someone else who really wanted to attend was unable to get a place because you had signed up. Although we do not usually use guilt as a motivating factor, it may well be applicable in this case.

Q: Why have you chosen to offer these activities specifically – in what way are e.g. external engagement and internationalisation, innovation and open access important for my career as an associate senior lecturer in XXX or research team leader for the YYY research team?
A: You will understand when you take part in the activities. We dare to promise you that all these things will be subject to review in your next application for external funding and/or your application for promotion. You will want to know how to approach it and how to write.

Q: Why is everything in English? After all, we are a Swedish public authority, whose official language is Swedish, is it not?
A: We think you know the answer, but we’ll spell it out anyway: LU is an international university, in which a large part of the postdoctoral population does not have Swedish as a first language. We want to highlight career opportunities for everyone.

Q: Why are the activities scheduled during working hours? How am I to prioritise them in an already overloaded working day?
A: We realise that your time is not always yours to dispose of. This is why we offer the activities again and again, while some of them are offered only online so that you can choose when to complete them. One activity is specifically about time management and the art of prioritising…

Q: There are two activities I am interested in attending that are scheduled at around the same time – what is the idea behind that?
A: That was our mistake. Please let us know immediately so that it doesn’t happen again. The point is that the range of activities shouldn’t compete with itself.

Q: My supervisor/head of department suggests that these activities take time away from more important things – if I attend, I risk lagging behind the rest of my group. What do you think I should do?
A: Career and professional development trump narrow-minded leadership. Always.

P.S: You could let them know that there are activities for research team leaders as well.