

## First steps after a PhD

Doing a PhD is a goal for several years. A lot of effort and time are spent on it, and it can be exhausting at times. Once it is done and the first stress has gone, it is the right time to realize your place in science and think of what you want to do next. Usually we want to have a little rest after thesis defence and hope that life will become much easier after this event. But, truly saying, it is not like that. Scientific life is very competitive, and it requires much more effort, time and responsibility than while being a PhD student.

Struggling again and again with the experiments during a PhD, we hardly have time to think about what will be after the successful thesis defence. That is why sometimes after getting the PhD degree we actually do not know in what direction to move on and sometimes getting a PhD is considered to be a desirable ending. In the beginning, the fact of received diploma brings satisfaction with the result and gives us a piece of independence - we can fancy our own projects and plans. But if we have no plans to carry on the project, euphoria can later be replaced by confusion and frustration. As great as independence is, it takes a while to get used to and it requires taking the responsibility for your own future. What to do if you have found yourself in this situation and how to avoid upcoming troubles? This article will give you some tips to overcome the difficulties that might arise in the first steps after you get your PhD.

In fact, there are a number of difficulties that we might come across. These include the uncertainty about your position in the lab. In many cases PhD students were able to stay for a couple of months for a short Postdoc period in the same lab to finish off some work and prepare a publication from it. Whether this is possible in your case, depends on two things: Do you want to? Is there money to pay you? A first step to answer these questions is an open conversation with your PI, it can start with an email, but communicating with him/her will be important. Another option is, either right after graduation or after a short Postdoc, to search for a new vacancy. In some cases, this is motivated by a desire to change the field of interest or to develop your own research line but you need to find financial support for that. The latter implies writing applications which can be quite scary for the first time and upsetting if not supported. However, remember that everyone in every profession has to go through some sort of assessment and you should have already mastered this before, because you secured your PhD degree. You have done it once, you can do it again, just one level up! As for writing an application – please believe, the earlier you start practising the better. The accent in this issue falls on the aim of writing an application – either to become more independent in your field of interest (to get your own grant) or to join a new lab as a Postdoc. There are some common themes that apply to both, but also strong differences you need to be aware of. In general, it is always important to read the guidelines, which are given in the grant description or the job application from the vacancy. In case of doubt: ask the contact person provided and do not just submit something because you think you should know them! For more tips then take a look at the ISN-YSSC newsletter: [https://www.neurochemistry.org/ysscs-article-i-dont-want-to-write-a-grant-proposal/?utm\\_source=ISN+Newsletter+%7C+July+2020&utm\\_campaign=8d69f2a448-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_C\\_Newsletter\\_June\\_20\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_b6bc0b5952-8d69f2a44872637276&ct=t\(EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_T\\_Newsletter\\_June\\_20\\_COPY\\_01\)&mc\\_cid=8d69f2a448&mc\\_eid=214a1148a7](https://www.neurochemistry.org/ysscs-article-i-dont-want-to-write-a-grant-proposal/?utm_source=ISN+Newsletter+%7C+July+2020&utm_campaign=8d69f2a448-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_C_Newsletter_June_20_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_b6bc0b5952-8d69f2a44872637276&ct=t(EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_T_Newsletter_June_20_COPY_01)&mc_cid=8d69f2a448&mc_eid=214a1148a7)

On top of that in each case there might be some private circumstances and the matter is not to avoid them but to get ready to face them. The most adequate way to do that is to start thinking about your further scientific plans in advance - before you get your PhD. What can we do for that if being more precise? One easy and approachable way is participating at conferences. Conferences are the real opportunity to meet other researchers, interact with them, present your research, and develop new collaboration. It's not only the place where you present your poster but also where you can see and estimate someone else's research! There you will meet new people, potential PIs and find a vacancy you may get interested in, as well as get fresh ideas for investigation or inspiration for your own research proposal. Use this chance while studying to get a closer look to what could be interesting for you in future.

To sum up, on the one hand becoming a postdoc is another step forward in scientific life that gives you more freedom and independence but on the other hand it requires more responsibility, time, and effort. Communication with colleagues and people who know you, keeping your eyes open and being interested can be a key to find out what it is exactly you want to do. There is no right or wrong way in science in general, there are just ways that are right or maybe not right for you. One should keep in mind that every researcher who is a PI now has gone through similar troubles. Only practice and patience can help you to overcome them. So, have a good start into the postdoc status and see you next month!

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