Recruitment – Marking criteria and scoring examples

Example Applicant Answers with Scores and Comments from the Panel

This document contains example applicant responses to the two motivational questions from the first Prosper Postdoc Career Development Pilot recruitment process, along with the marking criteria for those questions, the panel scores and the panel comments.

For each motivational question we ask you to ascribe each answer to one of the four bands outlined in the marking criteria and make comments to summarise the strengths and weaknesses of each response against the scoring criteria.

**Question 1:** **What motivates your application to Prosper?**

In your answer you may wish to cover:

* What aspect/s of Prosper have appealed to you?
* How you intend to convert your motivation into a commitment to fully participate in Prosper?
* How much thought have you given to potential careers that you could follow beyond your current postdoc role (and how could Prosper assist you with that)?

**Marking Criteria:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Excellent/outstanding (4)** | All of the ‘good’ criteria are met plus some of the following:   * Demonstrates a deep understanding of the detail of what Prosper aims to achieve, making clear references to those in their answer (i.e. has gone beyond just the recruitment documents, has read Prosper blogs/visited the Prosper Portal webpage etc.) * Shows genuine interest and drive (reasoned) to participate in the cohort * Engages in self-reflection, providing critical comments * Provides a compelling answer, going beyond a ‘good’ answer on any of the following:   + their motivation,   + commitment to engage with Prosper   + their consideration of careers besides academia |
| **Good (3)** | * Answer raises several relevant points and these are adequately justified/developed * Demonstrates a good understanding of what Prosper is/ what Prosper offers * Shows good engagement with Prosper recruitment materials (e.g. through cross-referencing to those or some key messaging and some connections to personal circumstances are attempted) * Demonstrates ownership of their own career development * Demonstrates clear motivation to participate in Prosper * Shows a real commitment to engage with Prosper * Shows willingness to consider other careers besides academia |
| **Average (2)** | * Answer raises a few (1-2) relevant points, but these are not adequately justified/developed * Demonstrates some basic understanding of what Prosper is/what Prosper offers * Shows superficial engagement with Prosper recruitment materials (e.g. just mentioning having read them, reproducing messaging without making any further connections to personal circumstances etc.) * Demonstrates some motivation to participate in Prosper * Shows some commitment to engage with Prosper * Makes references to various career paths without clearly linking those to themselves. Career options beyond academia are not clearly or explicitly mentioned or considered. |
| **Poor/weak (1)** | * Answer may raise a relevant point, but this is vague and not at all justified/explained (e.g. answer is too short, answer is unclear, answer just centres around same point all along with no argumentation/justification or development provided) * Doesn’t directly answer the question. * Demonstrates a poor or incorrect understanding of what Prosper is/what Prosper offers * Only focusses on the benefit of the effective 10% contract extension (e.g. they want a contract extension with no interest in engaging in career development) * Shows no ownership of career development * Shows little or no motivation to participate with Prosper * Shows little or no commitment to engage with Prosper * Shows little or no willingness to consider other careers besides academia. |

**Question 1, What motivates your application to Prosper?**

**Panel Score: 4**

I would consider myself an experienced post-doctoral research associate (PDRA), having been in continuous employment between several different groups for over 6 years on time-limited contracts. I am now at a point in my career where I am driven to obtain longer-term prospects within academia or science-oriented industry. My main drive in applying for a position on the Prosper course is to take advantage of the expertise offered, to help focus my efforts into a clear and achievable plan and maximise chances of obtaining permanent employment. The career clusters on offer provide an attractive amount of scope within other industries that align well with my own interests. These include; ‘Education and publications’, ‘Environment and energy’, ‘Start-ups and entrepreneurship’, ‘Health and care’ and ‘Lifesciences and pharmaceuticals’. I feel my background in biochemistry, metabolism and haematological diseases (including COVID-19) provide a good foundation for exploring careers within these clusters. It is hoped that the Prosper course, through a dedicated coach, can offer focussed guidance to determine how best to take advantage of these opportunities. Through the mentorship, CV optimisation and insider discussion offered by the Prosper process, it is hoped that I can learn to avoid common pitfalls and embellish my current skillset to achieve these goals. Whilst working as a PDRA at the University of Liverpool, I have been motivated to achieve several goals to enhance my career alongside my dedicated laboratory-based role. Examples of this include obtaining accreditation in use of Prince2 project management approaches by self-funding both foundation and practitioner courses in 2020. This course is well recognised as a project management qualification in several established industries. Also during this year I took advantage of local opportunities’ and obtained the FLTHE teaching qualification, offered by the UoLs’ Academy. I can therefore appreciate that a lot of effort goes into these courses so am similarly committed to participate fully in all stages of the course. I have looked at employment beyond a PDRA. These include becoming a MSL, science writer and senior scientists in industries. In the latter, Prospers assistance could translate into knowledge of what these companies are looking for when applying and aid in what to include/highlight during job preparation. I expect that through partaking in Prosper I will be exposed to other opportunities derived through other industrial partners which may reveal further unknown opportunity. Essentially, I would like Prosper to help evaluate my current transferable skillset and help guide this into full-time employability, by the coaching, CV building and in-depth industry discussions offered on the course. The career coach mentoring aspect of Prosper is appealing to ensure that my efforts in pursuit of permanent employment are appropriate and focussed in pursuit of this goal.

**Panel Comments:**

Excellent outline. Clearly identified the key areas they may be interested in, have taken extra accreditation and thus shows initiative in preparing for change. Also highlighted alternative careers they have looked into.

6 years experience in multiple teams, Wants to develop a clear career development plan from Propser learning, Wide scope of possible areas of interest.

Recognising benefits of coaching, mentoring, CV work, have completed development such as Prince2 and teaching qualification.

Recognises that unthought-of opportunities may arise.

No specific mention on the model, looking at or using the portal.

**Question 1, What motivates your application to Prosper?**

**Panel Score: 3**

I am looking forward to being part of Prosper, and I like how its approach differs from other initiatives within academia I have attended before. It is promising that it guides postdoc for a period of time extending for several months, and the time invested on the program is recognised by a contract extension. The main point that appealed to me is the fact that participants get access to one-on-one sessions with a career coach, so we can craft a strategy to build a profile beyond academia. Since I finished my PhD, approximately two years ago, I have dedicated an increasing amount of time to think of non-academic career directions, but I find that it is not easy to find guidance on this topic and often feels like one is failing to fulfil expectations. My current supervisor and the University of Liverpool have been very supportive on this aspect, and during the last year I have pivoted to a data science-focused profile. I feel like my background in Theoretical Chemistry and Data Science would be appropriate for the 'Life Sciences and Pharmaceuticals' and 'Advanced Manufacturing and Material' clusters, and I could benefit from the Prosper program to transition to these fields. I am excited to work with a career coach to reflect on my skills, and interact with some of the companies involved in the program (e.g. Astra Zeneca, Bionow, IBM or Unilever) to translate my background into skills to be used in a non-academic context. I am also very interested on the 'Start-ups and Entrepreneurship' cluster, as I have been considering, for example, starting a start-up on specific applications of data science and machine learning to material science and related topics, but I have also struggled to find useful guidance on this topic. Finally, I look forward to participating in the 'Government and Non-profit' cluster, and learn how to actually apply the techniques I have learned during my PhD and postdocs to specific problems with direct consequences in society.

**Panel Comments:**

Thoughtful description of what career clusters they might interact with and why – and had included a breadth of career clusters.

Values the career coach.

Clearly explains how the Prosper offer, especially career coaches and several of the career clusters would be of use and benefit to them. Shows willingness to explore careers beyond academia.

Identified unique Prosper attributes. Identified career clusters they’re interested in.

Seem to have some level of career development control as they have pivoted to a different profile to their PhD.

Did not seem to have considered non-academic careers but could be because they’re a young Postdoc).

**Question 1, What motivates your application to Prosper?**

**Panel Score: 2**

I am an early career researcher and have just commenced the third year of my current postdoc position. I am passionate about working in a research environment. I am quite keen however to get an insight into the diverse research opportunities available outside of academia. I have always loved carrying out scientific research and over a period of time, I now have a better understanding that showcasing scientific aptitude doesn’t imply restricting oneself to academic settings; it can also refer to contributing to the field of science and healthcare in any form. I would like to explore the possibility of working in an industrial setting. After completing my PhD I had a brief stint working as a Scientific Officer at a Biotech company in India. This job involved working with a genetic counselling team and I had an opportunity to directly interact with the patients. This experience highlighted to me the chasm between industry and academia. One of the main reasons for me applying to this programme is to bridge the gap between Academia and Industry. A collaboration between industry and academia is the key to accelerate the value of research, as it will make the research conducted from the lab bench available directly to the patients, which will help immensely in the growth of health care sector. This training programme, I believe is tailored perfectly to the requirements of early researchers such as myself. This programme will help us to get the best career development training and also build confidence for laying an excellent foundation for our future career. During this training programme, I will have the opportunity to gain new perspectives and knowledge pertaining to a variety of healthcare settings. This programme will enable me to develop a networking platform where I can exchange ideas and information. The experience from this programme will not only benefit me but it would also empower me to pass on the knowledge obtained to my research group and further on to my department.

**Panel Comments:**

Talks about short experience working in Biotech firm in India

Quite generically written from basis of benefits of bridging academic-industry divide and doesn’t really demonstrate in depth understanding about Prosper or how it would assist them.

Applicant has engaged with some of the online material, and also demonstrates a willingness to disseminate what they get out of Prosper more widely. Also actively considering careers outside academia.

Bit vague with respect to how the specifics of Prosper have appealed to them – most of what written are generalities

Has clearly considered careers other than those within academia, specifically in healthcare.

Refers to Prosper as a training program. Also makes it sound like Prosper is only tailored towards healthcare.

**Question 1, What motivates your application to Prosper?**

**Panel Score: 1**

Hello there, I am aware that 'The Academy' is investing a lot of money and effort to support the career development of post-docs in the UK. I feel privileged for that and would like to use this resource. While I love my research and my current job. I am in a short-term contract, in my 40s and have a poor publication record. I believe Prosper is an opportunity to learn about all the means available to stay in academia; moreover, it seems to be a chance to be introduced to new job opportunities that I am not aware of. Thanks for your support, I am looking forward to this experience.

**Panel Comments:**

Highlights that Prosper may allow the applicant to be introduced to new job opportunities that they are not currently aware of.

Incorrectly states that Prosper ‘is an opportunity to learn about all the means available to stay in academia‘ and appears to think the Academy (UoL) is UK wide! Very short response.

V short and doesn’t explain in any detail what appeals to them about Prosper

Clear motivation.

Short. No mention of what alternative careers they have considered?

**Question 2: How will you add value to the creation of the Prosper model of postdoc development?**

In your answer you may wish to cover:

* What would the Prosper model be missing if you were not part of it?
* What will your personal experiences and individual circumstances add to the Prosper model?

Although by no means exhaustive, below are some indicative examples of the type of things that you could raise:

* Personal circumstances and/or individual background characteristics and how these have affected your engagement in development so far.
* Disciplinary norms and access to career development opportunities.
* Mobility and time related challenges (e.g. due to research in multiple countries, sites etc.)

**Marking Criteria:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Excellent/outstanding (4)** | Goes beyond the ‘good’ responses in any one of the following ways:   * Clear explanation of what they will add to Prosper is provided as well as a very detailed explanation of what value they will add, both linked clearly and thoroughly with Prosper’s aims * Provides a very detailed narrative, very clearly highlighting what they, as an individual, will bring to Prosper – focussing on their experiences both in and beyond their workspace - clearly showcasing their whole knowledge and experiences. |
| **Good (3)** | * Provides good explanation of what they (as an individual) will add / the value they will add to Prosper and how they can positively affect the development of the Prosper model. All points are clearly phrased as contributing factors, with all arguments being clearly and adequately developed. |
| **Average (2)** | * Provides some explanation of what they (as an individual) will add to Prosper and how they can positively affect the development of the Prosper model. However, not all points raised are clearly linked to what value the participants will add to the Prosper model. The answer is unbalanced and/or some points are underdeveloped. |
| **Poor/weak (1)** | * Does not provide a comprehensive enough answer (e.g. answer is too short, answer is unclear, answer just centres around the same point all along with no justification or argumentation provided) * Does not directly answer the question * The answer is unclear * Demonstrates a poor or incorrect understanding of what Prosper is/what Prosper offers and thus a flawed answer to what value they can add * Gives poor explanation of what value they add, only focusing on generic, impersonal aspects that would hold true for most postdocs i.e. ‘I’m a motivated, innovative researcher’ and not further unpacking or explaining what they add as an individual |

**Question 2, How will you add value to the creation of the Prosper model of postdoc development?**

**Panel Score: 4**

Postdocs have a variety of experiences and this needs to be reflected in the pilot model to ensure the model works for all in the future. Through my background, I have been able to develop a fairly well-rounded experience of academia. To date, I have held four postdocs, each working on different projects. Some of these projects ran simultaneously, and some overlapped with the end of my PhD, therefore time and priority management was critical. I have also been able to spend some time working with a biotech company and finally as an impact officer. Through this, I have managed to gain a varied experience in a short period of time which I believe would bring an invaluable element to Prosper. However, it does also highlight the instability of working on short term contracts in academia, and therefore the importance of being aware of your translatable skills and how these would fit into other potential career paths. Throughout my career, I have seized each opportunity as it comes. During my PhD, I was the lead of my Institute’s Postgraduate Society. I was responsible for organising events for students, for example; how to present, how to write better, career workshops and social activities. I also sat on a number of committees to ensure the student voice was represented. Being actively involved in such a community was very rewarding. Through this I began to understand the importance of participating fully in opportunities to get the most of them, which is what I aim to bring to Prosper. Through the society I was able to meet new members of the community and work together to develop events, something I thoroughly enjoyed and would love to emulate in the Prosper model with others in the cohort. I have tried to take this forward to my career, which was essential in pursuing my postdoc positions. In addition, my role as an Impact Officer showed me another aspect of academia. I was responsible for managing a number of cases at once, leading discussions with academics on their work (often outside my area of research) and advising them on the best way to showcase outputs and their impacts. I also liaised with external third parties to obtain evidence to support these reports. Through this, I found an increase in my confidence and I was able to work effectively with people from a variety of areas. I think this will be crucial to the Prosper model as it will enable me to participate fully with everyone involved in the project. Finally, my research and many of the impact cases I have worked on focussed on agriculture and farming. The farming industry is vital to the UK, and indeed Food and Agriculture is represented as a distinct career cluster in the Prosper model, which I would be excited to explore. Overall, I believe that my background and experience will be a vital asset to the development of the Prosper model. I would relish at the opportunity to be involved.

**Panel Comments:**

Has taken additional responsibilities during academic career.

Relates content to Prosper.

Previous involvement with stakeholders.

Detailed narrative of knowledge and experience.

Experience of juggling different postdoc roles simultaneously.

Draws on specific examples and tried to relate them to Prosper (mostly successfully) – clearly has researched what Prosper is about.

Link made with Prosper model – collaborative and multidisciplinary background.

**Question 2, How will you add value to the creation of the Prosper model of postdoc development?**

**Panel Score: 3**

I believe I have struggled to access traditional development programmes and job applications procedures due to my dyslexia. This disability has made it more problematic for me to articulate my skills and knowledge in a way that it is understandable to others. I often have not known where to start, and gotten lost in unwieldy applications forms or found myself bumbling the way through interviews. I feel my experiences of these processes may add to thinking about Prosper and how to better support people who struggle with traditional career application systems. Furthermore, I feel my class background (low-income, first in the family to go to university) has previously inhibited me at times during career opportunities and I would like to understand how to navigate these nuances better. I hope that I can help support the development of the programme so it is more inclusive and is supportive of a diverse range of individuals. I feel my varied background, from moving fields to involvement with different sectors, will add to the programme, as these different experiences have helped me to think “outside the box” and may add insights that have not yet been considered. I feel this will be particularly helpful for those who also have moved fields and that would like to understand the tread that draws everything together and how they can use this to orientate themselves in the future. Working on international projects has added additional demands in the past, making it difficult for me to attend career development appointments previously. The flexibility of Prosper will allow me to fully take advance of the programme if I have to undertake fieldwork (COVID dependence) during the pilot. Furthermore, I have designed my research to co-create and engage participants so that the outcomes are more meaningful to them. I would be very excited to be on the other side of that process and maybe can give some insights on what worked in my experience so that the process is truly collaborative. :)

**Panel Comments:**

Suggests they can provide support and experience of someone with dyslexia – when informing the development of our resources.

Experience of transition between disciplines.

Some good ideas of how the applicant could help others.

First generation perspective, and also experience of navigating academic world with dyslexia. Clear willingness to “give back” to the project as well as taking skills and experience from it.

Has obviously read the material, but doesn’t link back to key aims of the project.

**Question 2, How will you add value to the creation of the Prosper model of postdoc development?**

**Panel Score: 2**

Prosper is a well-thought initiative to widen the prospects of the post-docs and to provide a birds-eye view of the opportunities available outside academia. Being an international postdoc, I can present and exchange ideas with fellow members about various transferable skills I have acquired during my Ph.D. and how to hone them as every country has its own way of training future generations to contribute brainstorming ideas and lead the teams. My personal experience has also taught me how to tackle difficult bosses and maintain mental integrity. What I bring to Prosper is also my curiosity to know and observe things and analyze them. My aim to join Prosper is to contribute towards translational research by exploring my avenues to have a successful collaboration between academia and industry as they are co-dependent. From my perspective, basic research in academic labs paves a pathway for translational research in the industry. The most important skill which is applicable in everyday life as well as for a successful career is analyzing the problem and trouble-shooting it and that is what my Ph.D. and my 2-year postdoc experience have taught me.

**Panel Comments:**

The narrative is mostly work-life focussed, they could have expanded more about what experiences they bring (besides work ones) as an individual to Prosper.

‘Translational research’ useful – not clear what the applicant will bring in, specifically.

They can share how skills apply in different countries.

Manage difficult managers and manage mental health.

No reference to proposer model, co-creating, not specific description of specific skills and attributes to bring or how they have / will apply them beyond the general PostDoc skills.

Some of answer 2 perhaps could have been in answer 1 – as they talk about their desire to explore translational research.

**Question 2, How will you add value to the creation of the Prosper model of postdoc development?**

**Panel Score: 1**

I'm very motivated and professional. I'm sure that I will do great with Prosper's help. I've heard from several friends that work on industry that I would be great out of Academia because I'm easy going and people feel very comfortable around me.

**Panel Comments:**

Did not provide a suitable answer.

Barely any information given.

Very poor response. Doesn’t engage with discussing the Prosper model. Impression is application was rushed, which raises warning flags as to level of commitment they would ultimately have towards the project.