

Postdoc Career Development Pilot Cohort

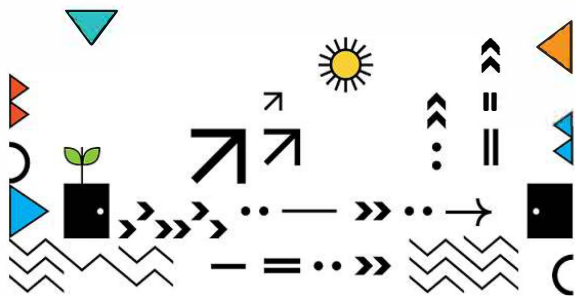
Our Postdoc Career Development Pilot is a unique opportunity for up to 90 postdocs from the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester and Lancaster University to co-create Prosper with us through a programme of intensive career development. **[Find out more in our recruitment brochure.](#)**

Prosper Postdoc Career Development Pilot



What's involved?

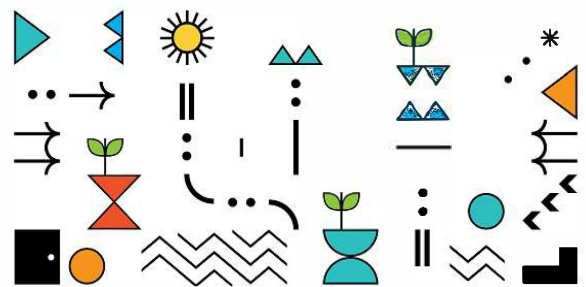
Find out more about the pilot, our employer partners and your career exploration journey on the cohort



How to apply

How to apply to join the cohort, plus information on the selection process

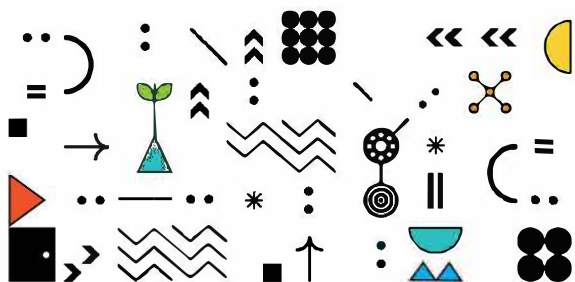
(<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/prosper/postdoc-career-development-pilot/how-to-apply/>)



Frequently asked questions

All of your questions answered - for postdocs and PIs

(<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/prosper/postdoc-career-development-pilot/frequently-asked-questions>)



What's involved?

Find out more about what the pilot entails

(<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/prosper/postdoc-career-development-pilot/whats-involved>)

How to apply

Interested in joining the pilot? Here's how to apply

Applications are now closed.

As part of your application, you'll complete a supporting statement outlining why now is the right time in your career journey to join the cohort, as well as outline how you can contribute to the co-creation of the Prosper approach by drawing on your experience as a postdoc and beyond.

We're creating a new approach to postdoc career development that address traditional barriers to access. A diverse pilot cohort that represents the breadth of experiences and backgrounds in the postdoc community is key to ensuring that Prosper is accessible and appealing to all postdocs.

To achieve this, we encourage applications from postdocs with protected characteristics and/or circumstances that may have impacted their access to development previously.

What makes a good application?

It's important that your application demonstrates why joining the Prosper pilot is right for you at this stage in your career, as well as demonstrating how your unique experiences and circumstances can contribute to the creation of the final Prosper approach.

When you write your application, consider the following pointers:

- Include detail on your understanding of Prosper, which aspects of the pilot appeal to you and why, and evidence and discuss your experience of engaging with the Prosper portal and its resources.
- Describe your personal and professional circumstances and clearly articulate how these would contribute to the co-creation of Prosper as a new model for career development that is open and accessible to the broadest possible range of postdocs.
- Discuss consideration you've already given to possible career pathways beyond academia.

Applications are now closed.

Who to contact

The Prosper team

prosper.postdoc@liverpool.ac.uk

Pilot drop-in sessions

Your opportunity to meet the Prosper team and ask your questions about the pilot

Throughout the application period, we're running informal drop-in sessions where you can meet the Prosper team and ask your questions about taking part in the pilot.

Apply from Wed 1
September

Date	Time	Zoom link
Tuesday, 7 September	3:00 – 4:00pm	[Zoom link]
Thursday, 9 September	10:30 – 11:30am	[Zoom link]
Monday, 13 September	2:00 – 3:00pm	[Zoom link]
Wednesday, 15 September	10:00 – 11:00am	[Zoom link]

Frequently asked questions

Here you'll find answers to commonly asked questions about the pilot.

These FAQs are based on our experience of recruiting our first cohort at the University of Liverpool in January 2021.

If you have any further questions, please contact us at prosper.postdoc@liverpool.ac.uk

You can also **[attend one of our informal drop-in sessions taking place during the recruitment period \(https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/prosper/postdoc-career-development-pilot/pilot-drop-in-sessions/\)](https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/prosper/postdoc-career-development-pilot/pilot-drop-in-sessions/)**.

Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply?

All postdocs who wish to apply must meet all of the following criteria:

- Are employed by the University of Liverpool, University of Manchester or Lancaster University on a research-only contract.
- Have a contract that lasts until at least 1 September 2022 or beyond
- **Are not** employed on independent or tenure track fellowships.

How have these criteria been reached?

The development of the Prosper approach is a partnership between the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester and Lancaster University. As part of the purpose of the pilot cohort is to co-create this approach with us, only postdocs from these 3 partner institutions are eligible to apply.

So that we can truly test the efficacy of our postdoc career development offering, it is key that postdocs are able to engage with the pilot for a sustained period to allow us to achieve this. Therefore, we are recruiting postdocs who are able to commit to the pilot for a minimum of 6 months, ideally 12 months.

The cohort will begin in February 2022. As such when postdocs apply to join the pilot, they will need to have a contract that lasts at least until 1 September 2022.

For those unable to participate in the pilot at this time, the Prosper portal houses a range of resources that are open to all staff at the 3 partner institutions. Here, postdocs can benefit from self-reflection tools, insights and tips from our employer partners and a library of case studies from postdocs who have forged careers beyond academia. These will be continually updated as Prosper progresses.

Can University of Liverpool postdocs who applied to the first cohort and were unsuccessful re-apply?

Apply from Wed 1
September

Who to contact

The Prosper team

prosper.postdoc@liverpool.ac.uk

Yes, these postdocs are welcome to reapply so long as they meet the eligibility criteria outlined above.

Can postdocs who travel with their research or aren't based on-campus at either of the 3 partner institutions (or even in the UK) still apply and participate?

Yes, we encourage these postdocs to apply. Prosper is delivered flexibly so there are no fixed compulsory event dates or locations. The Prosper career development approach needs to work for all postdocs and the experience of postdocs working remotely or in multiple locations is welcomed to help us build an approach that works for postdocs in such situations.

Can internally funded postdocs apply?

Yes, if they are employed on a research only contract.

Why is this only open to postdocs?

Prosper is aimed specifically at the career development of postdocs, a group which has historically been underrepresented or grouped together with initiatives for PhD students or early career researchers/fellows on tenure track.

As other initiatives exist for PhD students applications to join the Prosper pilot are only available to postdocs, understood as those who have completed their PhD and have not yet become independently funded researchers. However, Prosper and its associated resources will be open and available to all in 2023. All staff at the 3 partner institutions **can access the Prosper portal now** (<https://prosper.liverpool.ac.uk/>).

Benefits of the pilot

What are the benefits of taking part in the pilot?

Prosper gives postdocs the chance to expand how they view their career pathway.

This career development pilot has been co-created with more than 80 employer partners and designed specifically to enable postdocs to explore multiple career pathways. Participants will benefit from direct access to our employer partners, professional career coaching and ringfenced time for self-reflection.

This second cohort will also benefit from our learnings from the first cohort currently underway with 53 postdocs at the University of Liverpool.

The pilot will be delivered flexibly, allowing the broadest possible range of postdocs to take part. We also recognise that time is a barrier to accessing development opportunities. To address this, time for participation will be facilitated by funding from Prosper.

You've mentioned the co-creation with employers, is this a placement scheme?

No, Prosper is a career development approach developed closely with employer partners. It is not a placement or internship scheme.

Will there be a single cohort across the 3 institutions or 3 separate ones?

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There will be a single cohort across the 3 partner institutions. This will give participating postdocs the opportunity to engage and network with fellow postdocs across all 3 partners as they participate in career development activities.

Selection

What is the selection process?

Following an online application process, applications will be reviewed by selection panels comprised of representatives from across the 3 partner institutions, along with external representatives with different areas of expertise and from various career stages.

The selection panel members will anonymously mark the two motivation questions of all valid submitted applications against a set of marking criteria. Marks awarded for both motivation questions will be equally weighted. Depending on the numbers of applications received, the lowest scoring applications may be sifted at this stage and not go forward for discussion at the selection panels.

The remaining applications will be discussed at the selection panels and ranked lists of applications produced.

The number of selection panels will be determined by the number of applications. If there is more than one selection panel, a moderation process will operate after the panels' meetings to ensure fairness and consistency of marking across the panels.

The Prosper Team and Chair of the panels will then use the ranked list of applicants and the panel's commentary in conjunction with aggregate data on participants' discipline, gender and ethnicity to inform which applicants are invited to join the pilot cohort. Discipline, ethnicity and gender information will be used as a deciding factor if the panel has marked the motivation questions of two applications identically at our cut-off point for selection to the cohort.

How many places are available on the cohort and how will they be allocated across the 3 partner institutions?

Up to 90 places are available in total on the cohort. Using the selection process described above, up to 25 places on the cohort will be allocated to postdocs at each of the 3 partner institutions, totalling 75 places. The remaining 15 places won't necessarily be shared equally across the 3 institutions; instead, they will be awarded to the next 15 candidates as judged by the selection process above.

How will you ensure you recruit a diverse cohort?

Democratisation of access is central to Prosper and as part of this commitment, we want to be proactive in developing a new approach to postdoc career development that is accessible and valuable to our diverse postdoc community and addresses traditional barriers to engagement.

You can read more about the make-up of our first cohort at the University of Liverpool and the lessons we learnt on our blog.

Based on our learnings from recruiting our first cohort, for this second cohort we will:



- Build on previous engagement with our target populations (for example, through continuing to engage with relevant staff networks) throughout the recruitment process to make sure that we are active in reaching out to the widest postdoc community.
- Include in the application process a motivation statement that asks all applicants to provide a commentary on why they would add value to the cohort and how their circumstances and experiences would contribute to the development of Prosper.
- Aim to meet our minimum thresholds for representation in relation to gender and ethnicity across cohort 1 and 2; these are two equality and diversity characteristics that have historically related to unequal access to career development and progression.
- Aim to meet a minimum target for participation by broad disciplinary areas.

Our ultimate goal is to recruit a diverse pool of postdocs, who will become our partners in co-creating our innovative career development approach, giving us the chance to test, adapt and shape Prosper so that it caters for the needs of the wider postdoc population.

As well as the above minimum threshold targets, we are also keen to ensure that the group of postdocs joining the pilot represent the broadest possible range of experiences and backgrounds. We strongly encourage applications from all postdocs, and especially those who may have previously found accessing career development challenging. This includes, but isn't limited to, those with caring responsibilities, disabilities, and part-time postdocs.

What are the targets for participation in the pilot cohort and how are you going to achieve those?

Across both our pilot cohorts, which will be comprised of up to 143 participants, we are aiming for the following minimum targets for representation:

- An equal gender split. The gender balance in each discipline varies greatly and we have further broken down our overall target into minimum disciplinary thresholds broadly reflecting the current population. Our aspiration is to have an equal gender split across all disciplines but we recognise this does not reflect the current reality in population make up by disciplinary area. By setting minimum thresholds, we seek to ensure representative gender representation by discipline.

Our gender by disciplinary area thresholds are as follows:

- Biomedical and Biological Sciences – 50% female / 50% male
- Physical and Environmental Sciences and Engineering – 30% female / 70% male
- Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences – 60% female / 40% male
- 25% representation from BAME postdocs
- 20% representation from each of the above three broad disciplinary areas



We will monitor applications submitted and take additional targeted communication actions as needed to make sure we reach these populations. If necessary, the application period will be extended for a week to allow us to engage further with any missing or underrepresented groups.

Operational considerations

How does the funding for postdocs to participate in Prosper work?

A key aspect of Prosper is its funding to allow postdocs the time to engage fully with the pilot alongside their research commitments. This funding equates to 0.1 FTE of the postdoc's contract for the period of their engagement with the pilot. This funding will support a contract extension and is in place to ensure that time is not lost from participants' research projects. The length of contract extensions will be calculated based on the 0.1 FTE salary saving for the period the postdoc is engaged with Prosper (between 6–12 months).

Postdoc contracts will be extended dependent upon individual circumstances, PI agreement and funders' (both internal and external) terms and conditions and approval.

We are aware of the range of postdoc contracts and their contexts. We will explore individual cases with the aim of accommodating as many scenarios as possible. While we will endeavour to put this funding in place for all postdocs who are accepted onto the cohort, there may be instances when this isn't possible.

In its simplest form, the 0.1 FTE equates to 13.75 hours per month for postdocs to participate in the pilot. Prosper is delivered flexibly so there are no fixed compulsory event dates and the use of this time across the month can be managed flexibly by the postdoc in line with their project demands.

We are working with Research Support colleagues, Human Resources and various funders across the 3 partners to find workable solutions to contract extensions that allow for the additional time to participate in Prosper. Given the wide variety of funders and circumstances, it may be that we are unable to find workable solutions in every case.

Postdocs and their PIs do not need to approach their funders at the application stage.

How does Prosper's funding work for part-time postdocs?

It is key that all postdocs on the pilot have sufficient time to engage with Prosper. All successful postdocs will benefit from 0.1FTE funding for the period they engage with Prosper, including those who are contracted on any basis below 1.0 FTE.

Do postdocs need PI approval to take part?

We don't require postdocs to have sought PI approval at the point of application, but those postdocs whose application is successful will need their PI's agreement to participate.

We encourage postdocs to discuss their participation with their PI as early as possible. PI approval will be needed before we can begin discussions with funders to initiate the funding process where applicable.



Why is PI approval for participation needed?

Participation in the Prosper pilot occurs simultaneously alongside existing research projects. It is designed to be flexible but this will require postdocs and PIs to determine together how postdocs' participation will work alongside their research role.

Additionally, PIs (with support from Prosper, Research Support services and Human Resources) will need to be involved in the process of securing funder agreement.

Participating in the pilot

What does participating in the pilot involve?

The pilot is an opportunity for postdocs to benefit from ring-fenced time for exploring multiple career pathways. In practice, this means engaging with a mixture of self-reflection activities and tools, attending sessions with both the Prosper team and external facilitators (around topics such as networking, communication, leadership, top tips for creating CVs etc.), regular career coaching, plus exploring and applying content and insights from our employer partners and the 12 Career Clusters we've co-created with them. There will be opportunities to interact directly with some of our employer partners, for example through panel sessions or informational interviews.

With the exception of career coaching, we also ensure that pilot content and events are available on-demand so that participants can engage with them at a time that works for them.

Is the pilot aimed only at exploring careers beyond academia?

Prosper was conceptualised with an understanding that while there are many existing resources and development opportunities that are aimed at postdocs who wish to continue pursuing an academic career, there was a need for an approach that could enable postdocs to explore the broad range of opportunities available to them beyond academia.

For this reason, much of the employer-based content of the pilot comes from sectors beyond academia and we are looking for participants who are open and committed to exploring these other career opportunities.

The emphasis on the pilot is on participating postdocs exploring their skills, values, attributes and ambitions in the broadest possible sense and using these insights to guide the direction in which their career develops, be that within or beyond academia.

What is the weekly/monthly time commitment to the pilot?

Participation on the pilot is facilitated by Prosper's funding to give postdocs the space they need to explore multiple career pathways.

While we don't stipulate how participants allocate this time for engaging with the pilot, the following guidelines are recommended to participants. These are based on a postdoc working full time hours and engaging in the pilot for 12 months:

- One afternoon a week



- Around 13 hours (or 2 days) per month
- Around 38 hours (or 5 days) per quarter

Does the pilot cater to all disciplinary backgrounds?

Yes, one of our core aims for Prosper is to create a new approach to career development for all postdocs across all disciplines. Recruiting postdocs to the pilot from all disciplinary backgrounds forms one of our 3 recruitment targets.

Once on the pilot, participants will explore our 12 career clusters, which showcase career pathways that are relevant to all disciplines. They are:

Advanced Manufacturing and Materials, Creative and Cultural Industries, Education and Publications, Environment and Energy, Financial, Business and Professional Services, Food and Agriculture, Government and Non-profit, Health and Care, ICT and Digital Technology, Life Sciences and Pharmaceuticals, Start-ups and Entrepreneurship and Transport Systems.

If you have any further questions, please contact us

at prosper.postdoc@liverpool.ac.uk



