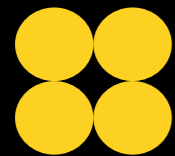# Prosper.

Unlocking postdoc
career potential

"People are absolutely core to a vibrant research and innovation culture, and a major priority for UKRI and the wider sector. The UK's postdoctoral community is a diverse pool of world-class talent. With the right support, postdoctoral researchers will play a key role in tackling the myriad social, economic, and scientific challenges of today and tomorrow, driving excellence both within academia and wherever their careers may take them.

What Prosper has built in this regard is very impressive, and the impact it has had on postdoctoral researchers in its pilot phase is extremely promising. I believe Prosper can play a leading role in driving best practice in developing postdoctoral research careers and strongly encourage research institutions across the UK to adopt and make use of Prosper resources."

Professor Dame Jessica Corner,
Executive Chair of
Research England

"It's great to see just how far Prosper has come since its inception. All the co-creation, testing and refining has culminated in a genuinely unique offering in the postdoc career development space – a rich and comprehensive set of resources designed for postdocs as postdocs, crafted in close collaboration with our partner institutions, the wider sector, employers, and of course postdocs themselves.

I've seen first-hand the transformative impact Prosper has had on the postdocs involved in our pilots. Now that offering will become freely available to postdocs and institutions up and down the country. I'm confident Prosper can act as a gold standard for the sector from the get-go."
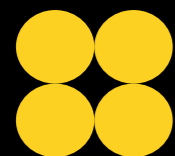
Anthony Hollander,
Pro-Vice-Chancellor for
Research & Impact at
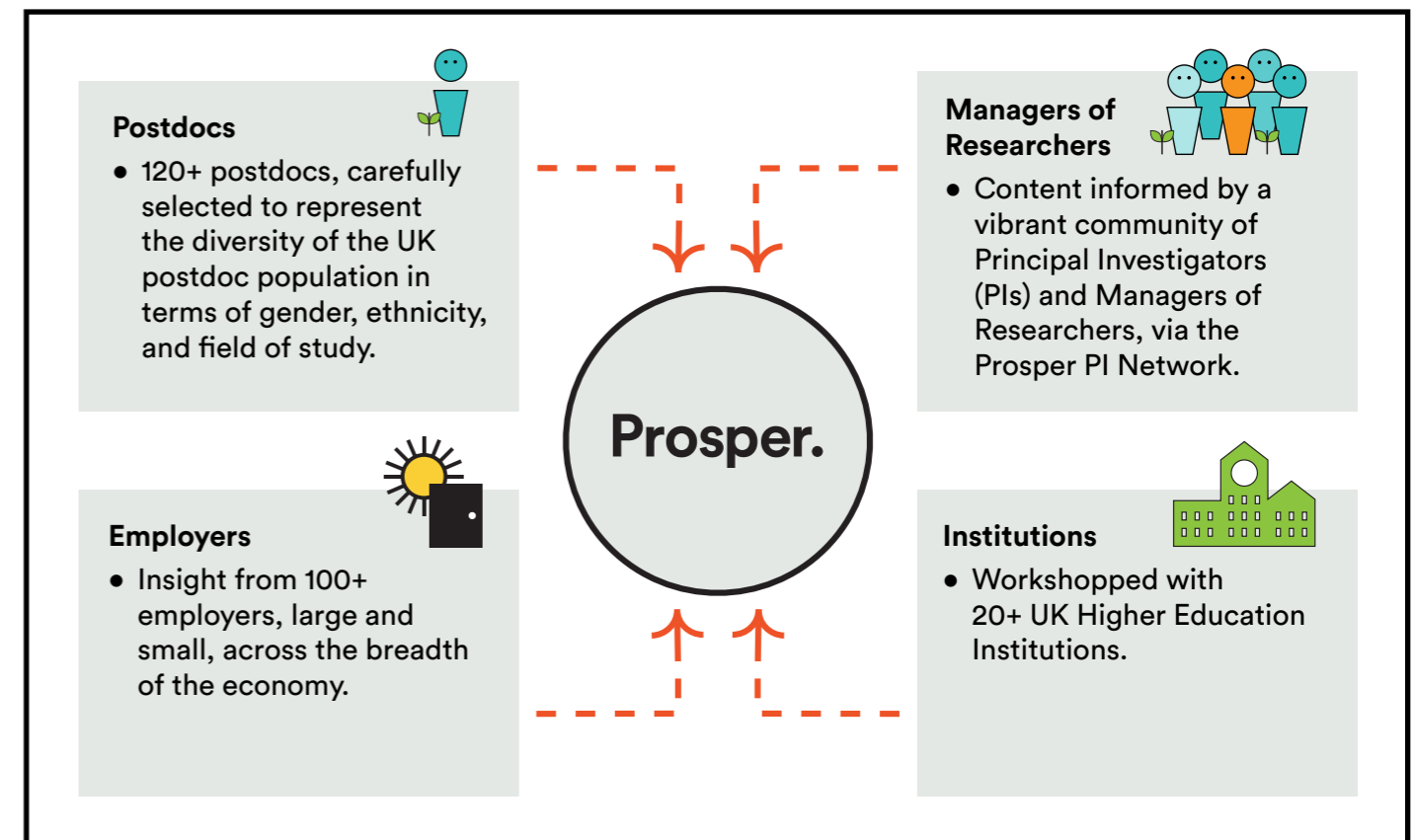The University of Liverpool

What is Prosper?
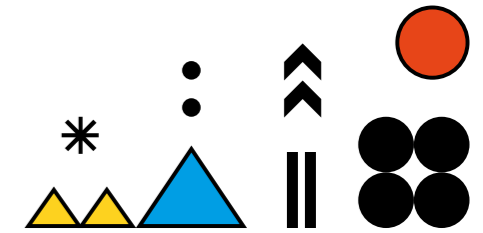
Prosper is a new, holistic approach to postdoc career development, designed for use by postdocs, managers of researchers, and institutions. It aims to give postdocs the tools and resources they need to thrive across multiple career pathways, both within and beyond academia.

Developed between 2019-23 with funding from the Research England Development (RED) fund, our aim is to transform this area of research culture for the better, to the benefit of all. Our resources were co-created and trialled with postdocs, managers of researchers, employers and the wider sector over the course of two pilot cohorts across the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester, and Lancaster University.

The resulting model is now freely available to all via the Prosper Portal, an online hub for all your postdoc career development needs. Whether you are a postdoc, someone who manages postdocs, or a researcher developer looking to enhance your own postdoc career development programmes – there will be something on our portal for you.

Postdocs
- 120+ postdocs, carefully selected to represent the diversity of the UK postdoc population in terms of gender, ethnicity, and field of study.

Managers of Researchers
- Content informed by a vibrant community of Principal Investigators (PIs) and Managers of Researchers, via the Prosper PI Network.

Prosper.

Employers
- Insight from 100+ employers, large and small, across the breadth of the economy.

Institutions
- Workshopped with 20+ UK Higher Education Institutions.

This brochure provides an overview of what we have to offer. Come and explore for yourself at: **www.prosper.liverpool.ac.uk** or by scanning the **QR code**.

For Postdocs

Reflect

- Identify your skills and skill gaps.
- Build your confidence.
- Discover your career priorities.

Self-awareness is an essential component of career development. Knowing your strengths and values is crucial to making informed choices and charting a fulfilling, successful career. Our Reflect section contains a range of resources to help you identify your skills and priorities, and figure out what you want from your professional future, including:

Take stock of your career so far

- Conduct a career audit.
- Discover what influences your career choices.
- Chart your professional and personal progression.

Discover what careers might suit you

- Learn about your personality preferences.
- Identify your values.
- Match careers with your strengths and interests.

Identify your skills and needs

- Conduct a skills audit.
- Discover how to make informed career decisions.
- Identify your transferable skills.

Overcome barriers

- Strategies to avoid self-sabotage.
- Find strategies to overcome limiting beliefs.
- Increase self-understanding.

> " Self-reflection helped me to know myself better – what I really enjoy and value. I realised that just because I can do a job, doesn't mean I have to. "
>
> Prosper postdoc, Biomedical and Biological Sciences

> " I felt very supported by Prosper – it was like I was building myself up again from scratch. It gave me back the confidence I'd lost. "
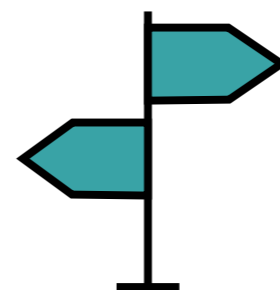>
> Prosper postdoc, Biomedical and Biological Sciences

For Postdocs

Explore

- Direct insights from employers across 12 career clusters.
- Learn first-hand about routes other postdocs have taken.
- Develop in-demand skills.

Knowing the full breadth of your options is important to making informed career decisions. A better understanding of sectors, valued skills, roles and opportunities can make all the difference. Our Explore section contains a wealth of inspiration to help you discover more about the full range of opportunities and possibilities open to postdocs today, including:

Learn about your options

- Broaden your knowledge of sectors and roles.
- Learn what routes other postdocs have taken.
- Explore our career clusters.

Become a better networker

- Conduct informational interviews.
- Discover tips for effective networking.
- Expand your network.

Scout opportunity

- Map your 'warm network'.
- Learn strategies for engaging employers.
- Discover where to hunt for roles.

Develop in-demand skills

- Learn what employers look for.
- Develop your commercial awareness.
- Cultivate a growth mindset.

> " Prosper was fantastic for developing my thinking about where and how to direct my attention in terms of future career progression. "
>
> Prosper postdoc, Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

> " Through Prosper I've become more ambitious. I've a much stronger appreciation of the importance and uses of communication and interpersonal skillsets. "
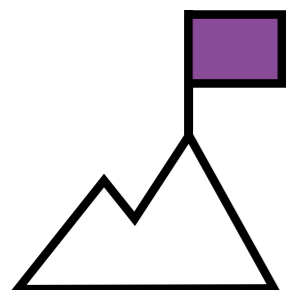>
> Prosper postdoc, Physical and Environmental Sciences and Engineering

For Postdocs

Act

- Learn how to effectively showcase your skills and tailor them to roles.
- Discover the essentials of setting up your own business.
- Grow in your role and drive continuous development.

With a strong idea of where you want the next stage of your career journey to go, you'll find resources in our Act section for you. Whether you're interested in developing in your current role, finding a job in a new sector or starting to work for yourself, our Act section contains a range of practical resources to empower you to take that next step, including:

Navigating recruitment processes

- Tailor your CV for any role.
- How to make speculative applications.
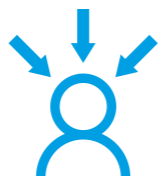- Stand out from the crowd.
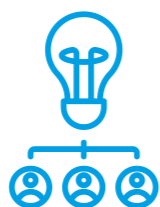
Becoming an entrepreneur

- How to set up your own business.
- Learn about freelancing and consultancy.
- How University spin-outs work.

How to self-market

- Learn to articulate your skills concisely.
- Harness your contacts to find opportunities.
- Improve your interview technique.

Continuous growth

- Improve your career conversations.
- Keep on track with your goals.
- Learn how to manage set-backs.

> " Prosper was a great help getting me to structure my CV for a non-academic job. "
>
> Prosper postdoc, Physical and Environmental Sciences and Engineering

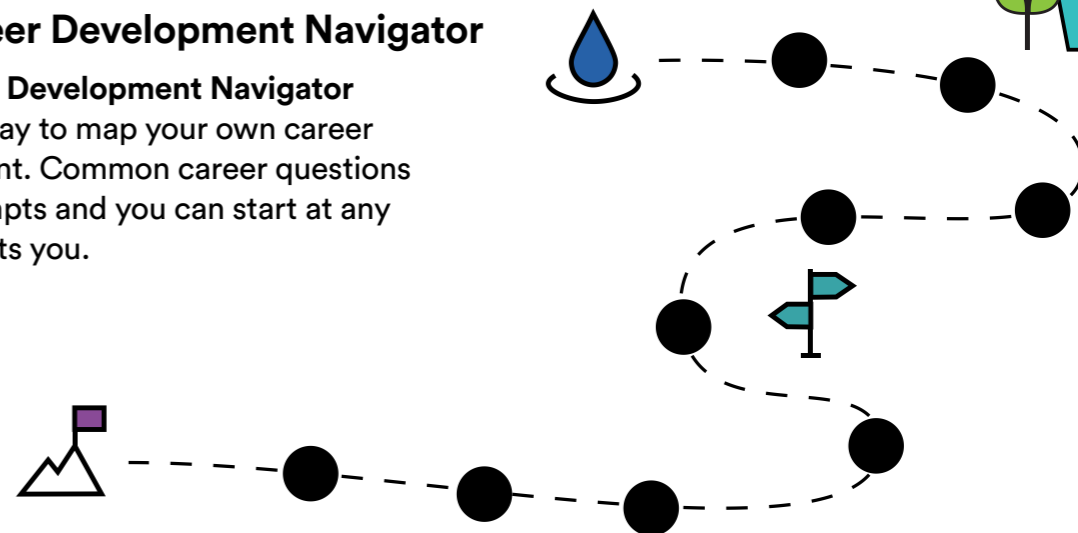> " Prosper really helped me understand the extent to which persistence is the key to success. "
>
> Prosper postdoc, Biomedical and Biological Sciences
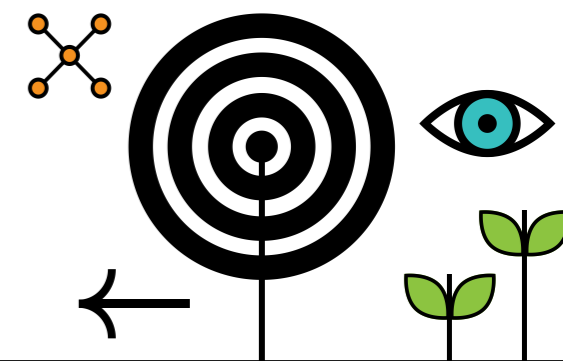
For Postdocs

The Career Development Navigator

The **Career Development Navigator** is a great way to map your own career development. Common career questions act as prompts and you can start at any point as suits you.

Learning and Development

If you're interested in exploring resources grouped by topic or skill the **Learning and Development** Library is for you.

Personalise Prosper to You

The portal can be used without registering. However, if you register you get access to a range of enhanced features:

Plot your own career path

Set, track and achieve your own career goals.

Navigate career advancement

Tailor your career development journey.

Add notes to resources

Record your thoughts, and clarify key ideas.

Save resources

Quickly access them whenever you want.

For Managers of Researchers

- Support your postdocs' career development.
- Develop your own leadership and management skills.
- Foster a positive and inclusive working environment.

Over 100 universities in the UK have signed up to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, which commits Managers of Researchers to prepare their researchers for a diversity of careers, and to allocate a minimum of 10 days pro rata per year for their professional development.

10 professional development days

Prosper is an ideal starting point for those 10 days, and can help you become a more effective manager along the way. Our Managers of Researchers section includes:

Creating an inclusive environment
- How to make your staff feel welcome and supported.
- Develop mutually productive working relationships.
- Prioritise the physical and mental wellbeing of staff.

The PI Network
- Attend events focused on sharing best practice and providing peer support between Managers of Researchers.
- Revisit resources and shared learnings from previous events.

Managing postdocs
- Leadership essentials.
- Effective use of Professional Development Reviews (PDRs).
- Learn first-hand from other managers.

Developing your postdocs
- How to have career conversations.
- Help your postdoc identify and grow their skills.
- How to enable your postdoc to explore career options.

> " **Prosper gave my postdoc an open-mindeness about their future options and helped create a really positive working relationship between us.** "
>
> Professor, University of Liverpool

> " **Prosper has the capacity to set excellent standards across institutions for professional development, and also to influence changes in attitudes.** "
>
> Senior Lecturer, Lancaster University

For Institutions
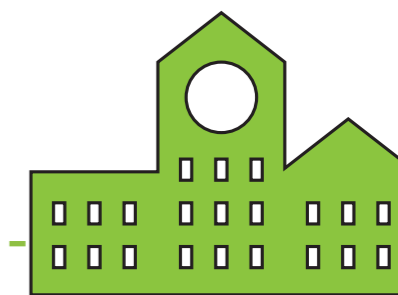
- Use Prosper as a flexible, modular and free career development model.
- Enhance your postdoc development offering.
- Cultivate a positive research culture at your institution.

People development is at the heart of a positive research culture. Institutions that invest in developing their people will reap the benefit of happy and productive teams, and increase their ability to attract and retain talent.

Our Institutions section contains a wealth of guidance and ready-made materials to enable the use of Prosper within your own organisation on a flexible, modular basis, including:

Adapt
Choose from our modes of delivery - whether you want to replicate a full Prosper cohort, or simply adapt a specific resource.

Run
Guidance for every step from start to finish. From recruitment and onboarding through to evaluation and testimonials.

Learn
From planning communications and commissioning suppliers, to how to engage stakeholders and get buy-in, through to tips on running focus groups, panel sessions and more.

Guidance on using Prosper resources
From how to promote Prosper to your postdocs, through to how to use our career clusters, self-coaching resources, and more.

Share
You can also join our thriving Community of Practice, open to anyone with a responsibility for postdoc career development at their institution. Here you can:

- Read examples of best practice shared by others, and share your own.
- Access resources uploaded by other institutions.
- Ask questions and post comments.
- Learn of upcoming events at other organisations.
- Get details of our Annual Event.

Prosper is tried and tested
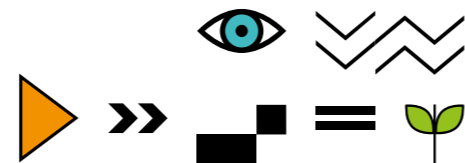
Prosper was co-created with 120+ postdocs over the course of two pilot cohorts – drawn from across the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester and Lancaster University, and carefully recruited to achieve a diverse and representative mix in terms of gender, ethnicity and discipline.

Proactive behaviour

The pilots enabled our postdocs to switch from an uncertain mindset to one characterised by proactivity and clarity. They became far more active in terms of growing their networks, self-marketing, and engaging with employers and opportunities.

> **Prosper was a great help in preparing applications and searching for my next position – I felt like I had everything I needed to be successful.**
>
> Prosper postdoc, Physical and Environmental Sciences and Engineering

> **To say Prosper played an important role in helping me to secure my new position would be an understatement.**
>
> Prosper postdoc, Physical and Environmental Sciences and Engineering

Inspiring outcomes

While Prosper is all about the long-term, many participants reported using what they had learned to secure exciting new roles both within and beyond academia, including positions at the Met Office, the European Commission, software companies, charities, and promising start-ups.

Increased confidence

Our postdocs showed a huge improvement in confidence levels relating to various aspects of their career development. Participants showed significant growth in their ability to self-reflect, translate their skills to match what employers look for, identify opportunities, develop job applications, and more.

> **Prosper was crucial to gaining confidence in transitioning beyond academia and shaping my profile to develop my career in the direction I want.**
>
> Prosper postdoc, Physical and Environmental Sciences and Engineering

> **I started Prosper with a very limited idea of what options were available to someone with my skillset. I still really enjoy working in academia, but am now far less fearful of looking for opportunities elsewhere.**
>
> Prosper postdoc, Biomedical and Biological Sciences

Broadened horizons

Participants reported a far broader and deeper understanding of the range of career pathways open to them, in many cases discovering options they didn't know existed before.

Role growth

Prosper is all about furnishing postdocs with skills for their whole career, wherever it takes them – including the here and now. Many of our pilot postdocs reported being able to use their newfound confidence and skills to grow within their current roles, and become more effective in their academic environment.

> **Even if you're happy in your current role, Prosper is helpful and worthwhile for growing key skills to help you flourish. The resources on networking, leadership and communication are all very useful for what I do now.**
>
> Prosper postdoc, Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

You can learn more about the impact being a part of our pilot cohorts had on the careers of participants in our postdoc case studies on the Portal: **prosper.liverpool.ac.uk**

Contact

Researcher Development and Culture Team,
The Leadership, Organisational, Professional & Academic Development Academy
University of Liverpool
126 Mount Pleasant
Liverpool
L69 3GR

Email prosper.postdoc@liverpool.ac.uk

🐦 @ProsperPostdoc

🌐 prosper.liverpool.ac.uk

in linkedin.com/company/prosperproject

Prosper. Unlocking postdoc career potential