



Guideline for Postdocs and Senior Scientists' Career Development in the Cluster of Excellence 'Climate, Climatic Change and Society' (CLICCS)

Postdocs and senior scientists are essential pillars of the cluster's research. Consequently, their contributions and achievements are acknowledged within the cluster and externally showcased. The cluster is committed to enhancing the development of postdocs as well as senior scientists and offers them tailor-made career support tools.

1. Support for postdocs and senior scientists' career development

The Cluster of Excellence CLICCS is committed to providing optimal support for postdocs and senior scientists in their career development and further professional career.

The cluster defines two primary career phases for researchers after obtaining their doctorate, in alignment with the EU phase model, which is also endorsed by the DFG and recommended for clarifying these career phases:

1. Recognized Researchers or Postdocs (R2) who are not yet fully independent, particularly in terms of having their own extensive visibility and research output. They are mostly researchers up to 4 years after obtaining their doctorate. The group of postdocs is primarily in the orientation phase and development for independence in research.
2. Established Researchers or Senior Researcher (R3) who have already developed a certain degree of independence and are usually doing research more than 4 years after receiving their doctorate. R3 Researchers are expected to complete habilitation or habilitation-equivalent achievements within a reasonable time - depending on the qualification periods in the sense of the "Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz" (WissZeitVG).

In both career phases, all researchers are optimally supported in their qualification and will be prepared for the next career steps. Postdocs (R2) in the orientation phase will receive support in finding their own career path, whether in science or beyond.

The cluster supports all researchers for all career paths, including: a) long-term scientific career, b) science management career and c) a career beyond science.

- a) Postdocs and senior researchers pursuing a long-term science career are given necessary freedom to work on their own research profile and the corresponding qualification goals.

The cluster, all project chairs and principal investigators (PIs), support the development of the associated profile in the following qualification fields as part of this qualification path:

- Professional orientation and career planning
- Publication strategies
- Teaching and supervision



- (Personnel) Leadership
- Project management and teamwork
- Acquisition of third-party funding
- Committee work
- Science communication
- Establishing, maintaining and using networks
- International cooperation
- Interdisciplinary cooperation
- Review activities etc.

Postdocs and senior researchers should have at least one-third, and optimally 50%, of their working time available for independent research to advance their qualification goals within the cluster research project. Project leaders, PIs, and postdocs as well as senior researchers are advised to collaborate on a supportive strategy to ensure both project and qualification objectives can be achieved.

- b) Science managers with coordination responsibilities, if they choose this path, will receive long-term support in building such a career. They will receive support through various means, including participation in part-time training, degree programs, or certificate programs, as well as workshops, webinars, podcasts, and customized training videos tailored to the specific needs of science managers. Practical experience development and networking opportunities with other individuals in science management, including those at the CEN office, and engagement in science management conferences and professional networks, will also be facilitated. Peer-coaching opportunities will be another valuable aspect for benefiting from the experiences and knowledge of colleagues.
- c) Researchers who aspire to pursue a career beyond academia will receive specific support as well. This may include counseling and coaching to identify their own career interests and skills outside of academia. They will have the opportunity to participate in qualification workshops focused on developing transferable skills applicable in professional contexts. Additionally, there will be an emphasis on career development, decision-making, interview training, and more. Researchers will also be encouraged to participate in networking events, including career days and job fairs, where they can engage in career discussions with representatives from companies. Furthermore, mentoring initiatives aimed at supporting their professional and technical development will be available.

When filling one of the scientist positions, it should be made as clear as possible which category of position is being considered. Specific qualification objectives for each job position should be defined.



2. Interdisciplinarity

The Cluster of Excellence offers a major advantage in its interdisciplinary research and cooperation, which can create tension for postdocs and senior researchers given the still prevailing disciplinary research landscape and professorships. All members of the cluster are aware of this discrepancy and specifically support all researchers in their qualification, including facilitating contacts and cooperation with other interdisciplinary institutions. Postdocs and senior researchers are also supported in their disciplinary research work, and are made aware of the tension between interdisciplinary and disciplinary research, with opportunities to address it.

3. Minimum terms and extension options of contracts for postdocs

The cluster adheres to the Code of Conduct of the Universität Hamburg.

Contract periods are typically at least three years in accordance with the HmbHG. To ensure appropriate postdoc qualification and development an offer for a further three-year contract extension is welcome if possible under the HmbHG and WissZeitVG regulations. In cases of impairments during the contract period that are not the contractor's fault and where project or qualification goals are not achieved within the planned time, a reasonable contract extension may be requested with appropriate substantive arguments. In the case of scientific positions that provide for longer contract periods, the possibility of habilitation or equivalence must be given.

4. Independence and personal responsibility in research

The Cluster provides opportunities for postdocs and senior researchers to become or be independent researchers, especially if their qualifications align with a long-term scientific career. Upon starting in the Cluster, each postdoc and senior researcher receives a written, binding statement detailing the resources available to them, including office and laboratory space, consumables, and research funds. Project chairs are responsible for making this statement available. To support postdocs and senior researchers interested in pursuing a long-term career in science, the Cluster offers additionally opportunities such as independent acquisition and implementation of (third-party funding) projects, according to the "Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice" of the DFG, and appropriate funds to hire (student) assistants. If a researcher has the appropriate ambitions, they are highly encouraged to pursue habilitation or an equivalent qualification. Postdocs and senior researchers should allocate a significantly lower proportion of their time to administrative tasks compared to scientific work.

PIs are responsible for ensuring that postdocs and senior researchers in their working group are given opportunities for early independence and self-determined research as outlined above.

5. Transparency, Scientific confidant and career development

In the first year of engagement within the cluster, the PIs and postdocs as well as senior researchers collaboratively establish clear qualification requirements. This process encompasses the definition of performance and quality criteria. Additionally, when establishing qualification objectives, consideration should be given to the individual career plans and research autonomy of the postdocs and senior researchers. It is advisable to conduct an interim evaluation at the midpoint of the contract period, during which the PI, and if deemed necessary, another scientific expert, assess the researcher's progress and performance.

The cluster is committed to ensuring appropriate, tailor made support of postdocs and senior researchers by experienced scientists and to fostering awareness among both groups about their own qualification on the academic career path. The SICSS Graduate School plays an important role in coordinating support for all researchers, offering consulting and coaching services to assist them in their career path.

Tailor made postdoc and senior researcher development and support tools consists of the following components:

- a) Career development review talks: Through career development review talks with PIs, ideally, two senior scientists, postdocs and senior researchers will receive an annual comparative assessment of their research and qualification achievements, as well as discuss their developmental potential. These review talks will also address the next career steps and the associated actions. In addition to career review talks an individual development plan (IDP) can be created.
- b) Mentoring: Postdocs and senior researchers have the opportunity and necessary support to choose a mentor who can provide an independent perspective and offer competent individual feedback on their current activities and future career prospects. These mentors should be located outside of the Universität Hamburg and serve as external advisors.
- c) Career Coaching: Postdocs and senior researchers have the opportunity to work with career coaches to further develop their profiles, receive guidance on challenging topics, and explore their career options. Coaching can focus on academic career paths or on other career goals.

All researchers are given the opportunity to be accompanied by one or more scientific confidants from the beginning of their work in the cluster. Ideally, one of them is the PI of the researchers' project. These confidants should contribute to the researchers' ability to develop their own career goals and create a successful profile through their knowledge of the scientific environment. They support the researchers in their career planning within the university or non-university system, considering the diversity, gender- and family-friendly structure of career paths.



All researchers are free to choose their scientific confident, who can be PI, other experienced scientists, or scientists from institutions outside of Universität Hamburg in the cluster's projects.

6. Further training opportunities – personnel development for scientists and accompanying support measures

Postdocs and senior researchers are to be provided with optimal conditions for their further qualification relevant to science and teaching, as well as their career advancement. The SICSS graduate school offers consulting and coaching services to assist postdocs and senior researchers in their career path. Networking activities are regularly communicated to all of them, along with their representatives. If postdocs and senior researchers have specific needs for workshops and training, the SICSS will address these needs and offer relevant services accordingly.

UHH's Human Resources Development, as well as the Hamburg Research Academy and the Hamburg Center for University Teaching and Learning, offer continuing education opportunities on the scientific, non-university, and university didactic qualification path. A closely interlinked network of university institutions, such as Research Support, Equal Opportunity and Family Support, the Welcome Center, and Career Service, also offer support services. Postdocs and senior researchers should inform themselves about the available offers and make use of them if necessary.

7. Leadership Competencies

Developing competencies in leadership and management is a priority for the Cluster in supporting early and mid-career scientists. Communication skills, making decisions regarding research directions, resource allocation, and team management, as well as self-management, innovation, and networking, are leadership attributes that researchers should build.

Postdocs and senior researchers are encouraged to develop skills to take on an effective leadership role in their work environment and research setting. In doing so, they are empowered to acquire project management skills such as planning, organizing, implementing, and monitoring research activities, setting goals, and making decisions to successfully complete projects.

Furthermore, these researchers should gain experience in teamwork and be able to lead teams of students, doctoral candidates or assistants. Postdocs and senior researchers are persuaded to take on the role of mentors for students and doctoral candidates. This provides them with early experience in supporting and motivating others, and helping them achieve their goals.



The Cluster strongly recommends and supports further training through workshops, coaching, and other programs to develop leadership skills.

8. Participation in and empowerment through teaching

Postdocs and senior researchers who are interested may participate in teaching at Universität Hamburg to an extent that is conducive to their qualifications. Teaching is done in consultation with the PIs, the responsible department, and responsible persons of the study programs. Project workloads and teaching commitments should be considered in consultation with the PIs.

Postdocs and senior researchers will be given opportunities to co-supervise or guide bachelor's and master's students, as well as doctoral candidates, wherever possible.

The Cluster supports the advanced training of all researchers in higher education didactics through programs such as those offered at the Hamburg Center for University Teaching and Learning (HUL). The researchers are also encouraged to participate in workshops on good supervision or other didactic offers at the Faculties and the Universität Hamburg.

All researchers, postdocs and senior scientists are introduced to taking on supervisory and examination responsibilities at an early stage.

9. Visibility and Mobility Experience

(Inter)national visibility is an essential foundation for all early and mid-career researchers to develop a profile that enables successful grant applications and job positions both within and outside academia. To achieve this, the cluster aims to support early and mid-career researchers in establishing intra- and extra-university research collaborations, participating in national and international meetings and conferences, and creating scientific networks. Moreover, the cluster recognizes the significance of awards and prizes and actively exercises its right to nominate scientists for such accolades.

Especially in the postdoc phase, research stays abroad of several months or years are considered a quality indicator for internationalization and broadening of experience. The cluster takes this into account and encourages especially postdocs to go abroad for some time, as well as to maintain international collaborations.

10. Participation and postdoc representatives

The cluster acts transparently, informs and engages postdocs on issues related to them and their activities. To represent the interests of this target group in committees and beyond every two years, two representatives are elected among the postdocs. One of the spokespersons represents the group of them in the Early Career Committee (ECC) of the CEN Graduate School SICSS and the other spokesperson is a member of the Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) of the cluster.



The Graduate School SICSS is in close exchange with the postdoc speakers and represents the interests of early and mid-career researchers. The SSC ensures that the interests of all researchers are seen and appropriately considered.

11. Compatibility of family and career, equal opportunities and family-friendly conditions

The cluster practices the promotion of early and mid-career scientists in line with its Gender Code and Equality Plan, with subject-specific targets and measures. Recognizing the significance of the postdoc and senior researcher career stages in engaging all scientists equitably, the cluster ensures that all funding instruments and measures are designed to be gender-responsive.

The cluster supports the diversity of all people and promotes internationality and interculturality, among other things.

For researchers with children and family members to care for, sufficient, suitable, and openly accessible offers will be made available, such as childcare, and the necessary funds will be permanently available.

12. Conflicts

Since conflicts, if any, often arise due to communication problems, an open and appreciative attitude towards communication is strongly encouraged for all employees in the cluster.

However, conflicts may also arise regarding good scientific practice. All cluster members agree to adhere to good scientific practice, as outlined in the “Bylaws for Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice and Avoiding Scientific Misconduct at Universität Hamburg” and in the “Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice” of the DFG.

In case of conflicts, postdocs and senior researchers can seek advice from different points of contact:

1. The SICSS-Team can be contacted in confidence at any time for consultation or coaching on how to deal with such stressful situations.
2. The Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) can be consulted in confidence at any time if conflicts arise with superiors or regarding good scientific practice. The Board will do everything possible to resolve the conflict.
3. In general conflict prevention and resolution at UHH can also be contacted confidentially at any time. Besides consultations, moderated conflict talks between parties are also available.
4. Furthermore, postdocs and senior researchers receive support from the ombudspersons of the Universität Hamburg in cases of conflict related to Good Scientific Practice. They work independently and consider themselves impartial arbitrators.