

Recruitment to research

The Research Council's policy 2016–2020

Research and innovation are essential when we as a society are facing challenges related to restructuring, climate, food, migration, health and education. To meet these challenges we need knowledgeable, innovative and competent women and men. We must attract talented individuals and give them opportunities for development and conditions that make research an attractive career option.

The Research Council's policy for recruitment targets in particular students in organised doctoral degree programmes and employees in the qualifying phase after completion of their doctoral degree.¹ The primary responsibility for recruitment and career pathways lies with the research institutions, and the role of the Research Council is to support their efforts by providing funding for research fellows and researchers in projects regulated by contract with the institutions.

Objective 1 Enhance quality in the researcher qualifying phase

The challenge

On the whole, Norwegian doctoral education maintains good quality. The quality varies,² however, in part because much of the researcher training takes place in small, insular research environments. Many doctoral research fellows find employment outside of academia, and doctoral education must be relevant for those positions as well. Recruitment of Norwegian doctoral students is weak in some important areas, and there is a lack of academic supervisors. There is also a need to strengthen interaction, mobility and knowledge transfer between countries as well as sectors.

The Research Council will

- offer post-doctoral researchers a 3–12 month extension of their fellowship period in connection with a research stay abroad, corresponding to the length of the research stay;
- strengthen targeted measures that promote international mobility, including the *FRIPRO mobility grant* for post-doctoral researchers;
- offer *overseas research grants* to all doctoral and post-doctoral research fellows funded by the Research Council;
- create a better framework for women and men with caregiving responsibility and for dual-career couples to conduct *research stays abroad*;
- help to increase interaction between doctoral education and other segments of working life by strengthening and further developing the *Industrial Ph.D. scheme* and the *Public Sector Ph.D. scheme*;
- further develop the scheme for *national graduate-level researcher schools* as a means of enhancing quality and relevance within doctoral education;

¹ Compare to R1 First stage Researcher and R2 Recognised Researcher., in the European framework for Research Careers: http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/towards_a_european_framework_for_research_careers.pdf

² Thune, et al.: *PhD Education in a knowledge society. An evaluation of PhD education in Norway*. NIFU Report 25/2012.

- strengthen the role of the research institutes in doctoral education in areas that lack capacity to provide academic supervision and that have a low level of recruitment of candidates from Norwegian institutions;
- continue to provide funding for *doctoral and post-doctoral research fellows* involved in cutting-edge projects that have won funding from both open and thematically oriented initiatives;
- enter into a dialogue with the institutions on the need to offer start-up packages for recruitment of especially attractive foreign researchers at the senior level (*chairs*).

Appointment to the positions of doctoral research fellow and post-doctoral research fellow

The Research Council follows the current guidelines for appointments to positions as doctoral research fellow and post-doctoral research fellow in the university and university college sector, which state among other things that:

- the objective of a position as doctoral research fellow is completion of a doctoral degree;
- the objective of a position as post-doctoral researcher is to qualify individuals for work in senior-level academic positions.

The titles “doctoral research fellow” and “post-doctoral research fellow” are not protected, and the Research Council also provides funding for doctoral and post-doctoral research fellowships outside the university and university college sector. When such funding is granted, however, the intention of the regulations serves as the norm.

The Research Council follows international norms of recruitment¹ and assumes that appointment to recruitment positions

- occurs through *open processes* and in keeping with the individual’s qualifications;
- takes place in high-quality, dynamic *research environments*;
- promotes *internationalisation and mobility* in research;
- promotes *gender balance* in research;
- provides qualifications for *various types of positions* within and outside academia.

¹ The European Charter and Code for Researchers. <http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/whatIsAResearcher>. Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment. European Commission 2015.

Objective 2 Ensure capacity in the researcher qualifying phase

The challenge

While the demand for *doctoral-level competence* is rising in all segments of working life, there is less of a need for *post-doctoral researchers* who will obtain qualifications to assume senior-level academic positions in the future. The competition for senior-level positions is keen in some areas, and the number of post-doctoral researchers who obtain a permanent position in academia is very low.³

In the near future, there will be a great, unmet need for researchers in *mathematics, natural science and technology* and in the *health and social care sciences*. Research expertise in many of the professional fields is generally low and should be increased. To enhance the quality and capacity in the Norwegian researcher qualifying phase, the funding opportunities available

³ Gunnes, H. and P. Børing: *Veien fra postdoktor til akademisk. En statistisk analyse av postdoktorenes karriere ved utdannings- og forskningsinstitusjonene*. (“The road from post-doc to academia. A statistical analysis of the careers of post-doctoral researchers at educational and research institutions.”) NIFU working paper 2015; 15.

from European research and innovation programmes must be exploited more fully than they are today.

The Research Council will

- enter into a dialogue with research institutions about the need for *post-doctoral researcher positions*;
- in calls for proposals, state clearly when recruitment will be taken into consideration in the assessment process;
- provide funding for positions that are an alternative to post-doctoral positions, such as researcher positions, in projects aimed at capacity building;
- continue to strengthen recruitment in national priority areas by providing funding for fellowship positions;
- continue national schemes that mobilise and qualify researchers to participate in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, *Horizon 2020*, including a special stimulation scheme for outgoing mobility under the *Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions*;
- work to achieve gender-balanced participation in mobilisation measures for *Horizon 2020*.

Objective 3 Make research an attractive career option

The challenge

To achieve the objectives of more outstanding research environments and a more knowledge-based, innovative working life, talented women and men, regardless of ethnic background, must be recruited to the research sector. To retain and develop talented individuals, they must be provided with good training, good conditions under which to conduct their research, and good career opportunities. There is a need for more instruments that clearly demonstrate investment in young people – instruments that also encourage them to pursue further efforts within research.

The Research Council will

- support measures similar to the *researcher track* in a number of subjects, so that promising students can begin researcher education at an early stage;
- make use of the *Industrial Ph.D. scheme* and the *Public Sector Ph.D. scheme* in a wider array of Research Council instruments;
- strengthen the role of *post-doctoral researcher positions* as a career-promoting instrument, e.g. by requiring that the contract between the fellowship-holder and the degree-conferring institution includes a development plan and plans for academic mentoring;
- make use of the application type *Young Research Talents* in a wider range of programmes and activities;
- invest in young, talented women and men by offering attractive funding schemes in the early phase of their careers;
- enter into a dialogue with universities and university colleges on creating a framework to provide funding for *tenure track* positions;
- provide funding for the position categories of doctoral research fellow, post-doctoral fellow and researcher when grounds for this are given in the grant application;
- provide *meeting places* for research fellows and young researchers that encourage an exchange of experiences and network-building across subject areas, topics and sectors;
- apply moderate gender quotas in all of the Research Council's instruments.

Research Council's measures and forms of support

The Research Council has a set of measures and forms of support directed towards recruitment, career pathways and quality in researcher training. During the policy period, an effort will be made to improve these and to develop new, more targeted measures:

- ❖ *Doctoral research fellowship.* Awarded as part of a larger project. Awarded as a personal grant under special circumstances. The objective of the fellowship is completion of a doctoral degree.
- ❖ *Post-doctoral research fellowship.* Awarded as part of a larger project or as a personal grant. The primary objective of the fellowship is to qualify individuals for work in senior-level academic positions. The post-doctoral research fellowship is awarded primarily to degree-conferring institutions. When an applicant institution (employer) does not have the right to confer a doctoral degree, a collaboration agreement with a degree-conferring institution is required. When an appointment is made, an academic mentor and development plan must be in place.
- ❖ *National graduate-level researcher schools:* A structural, coordinating measure to enhance quality and cooperation in doctoral education. Support for national graduate-level researcher schools is awarded to the degree-conferring institution serving as host and partners with and without the right to confer a doctoral degree.
- ❖ *Industrial Ph.D. and Public Sector Ph.D. schemes.* Partial funding of doctoral research fellowships. The objective is to strengthen innovation capacity in trade and industry and the public sector, as well as to promote greater interaction between academia and working life at large. Awarded to companies or public institutions in cooperation with a degree-conferring institution.
- ❖ *Research fellowship scheme for the institute sector.* Established in 2015, this scheme awards doctoral research fellowships to the largest, most significant research institutes in priority areas.
- ❖ *Young Research Talents.* The objective is to provide career opportunities for particularly talented young researchers who have demonstrated the ability to conduct independent research of high scientific quality. The projects are to help to promote scientific renewal or generate new knowledge about issues relevant to society.
- ❖ *Overseas research grants.* Generally awarded as part of a project funded by the Research Council, including to doctoral and post-doctoral research fellows. The objective is to promote competence building in, and the internationalisation of, Norwegian research.
- ❖ *FRIPRO mobility grant.* This is a new application type under the funding scheme for independent projects (FRIPRO). The objective is to increase the mobility of younger researchers and help to promote their career development. The grants are awarded for a three-year period. The first two years must be spent at an institution abroad and the third year in Norway.
- ❖ *The MSCA-TOPP-UT scheme* provides top-up funding for researchers from Norway who receive a grant from the Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions (MSCA) to conduct a research stay outside of Norway. The scheme aims to even out the financial imbalance in relation to national schemes and make a research stay abroad through the MSCA more attractive.
- ❖ *National Science Week.* A national, annual festival in which all types of research and knowledge-based institutions are invited to present their activities to the general public in new and exciting ways. The festival is held over a two-week period each autumn.
- ❖ *The Nysgjerrigper Science Knowledge Project.* Measures for recruiting more children and adolescents to a research career through exciting dissemination activities and events designed to increase participation and interest.
- ❖ *The Research Campaign.* Under this measure, individual schoolchildren perform small tasks that together comprise a larger contribution to a research project. The tasks are done at the local level, and the results are published online.