

UCC Research Career Structure FAQ's

Q.1 What is the Research Career Structure in the University

UCC recently introduced a Research Career Structure in line with national recommendations and the Advisory Science Council Report 'Towards a Framework for Researcher Careers'. This structure supports the Career Development and Training of research staff in the University and is designed to ensure that Post-docs in UCC are able to plan their careers and prepare for future opportunities in academia, industry or the public sector.

The implementation of a career structure for research staff supports a move away from the frequent use of multiple short term contracts, supports an open, transparent and competitive process and the regularisation of contracts so that training and development can occur through the UCC Research Career Development and Training Framework. This structure will ensure that the training which supports the Post-doctoral and senior post-doctoral roles can take place and that Post-doc and Senior Post-doc researchers have security and stability during this period.

Q.2 What is the process to hire a new researcher?

The policy of the University is to advertise all research vacancies in accordance with the University Policy on the Recruitment and Selection of Research Staff. UCC HR is responsible for the placement of all advertisements.

Q.3 What are the research roles within the University?

Research roles in UCC are divided into a hierarchy as follows:

Entry level: Research Assistant

Stage 1: Post-Doctoral Researcher and Senior Post-Doctoral Researcher

Stage 2: Research Fellow and Senior Research Fellow

Q.4 What are the types of contract which can be offered to Postdoctoral and Senior Postdoctoral Researchers?

Employment at the Postdoctoral and Senior Postdoctoral level will not exceed a maximum duration of 6 years in total, when the researcher will be deemed to have completed their doctoral training and development in the University.

It is anticipated after 3 years at the Postdoctoral level a researcher will have obtained the skills and experience to compete to the Senior Postdoctoral level, should such an opportunity become available. Appointment at the Senior Postdoctoral level will be made through a competitive process. No Postdoctoral research contract will be renewed after 3 years. No Senior Postdoctoral research contract will be renewed after 6 years. However, in certain circumstances where funding is secured by the PI for a period greater than 3 years for a Postdoc, the contract may exceed 3 years in duration subject to the term of the project and funding.

The University will provide a structured programme of training, to support Post Doctoral researchers acquire the skills and experience necessary to become independent researchers, either internally within the University or externally within academia or the private sector.

Q.5 Why is the Postdoc phase considered to be a training period?

The Postdoc phase is typically a stepping stone to a position as an independent researcher, or to a career in industry, enterprise or the public sector. To ensure they are on this career trajectory the University will provide Post-doctoral researchers and Senior Post-doctoral researchers with a structured programme of training and career development, through the UCC Career Development and Training Framework.

Q.6 What will happen at the end of the Post doc contract term?

The employment will cease at the end of the term of the Post Doctoral contract in which the researcher is engaged. Continuation of a Post-doctoral researcher or Senior Post-doctoral researcher following expiry of their contract in a paid, unpaid or voluntary capacity is not permitted and any such continuation will be treated as a breach of University policy. Payroll will not provide salary payment for any such continuation either at the time or retrospectively.

Q.7 Is it possible to bridge breaks between Post-Doctoral and Senior Post-Doctoral research contracts?

No gaps will be permitted to be filled between research projects, *i.e.*, when a project terminates, the employment will terminate and a P45 will be issued. If a gap arises before funding is received for another project on which the Post-Doc or Senior Post-Doc may be employed, the researcher's contract will be terminated. New projects will be offered through a competitive process for an advertised position and the individual will be able to compete for this, or another position in the University should they so wish.

Q.8 What is a Non-Standard Post/Senior-Doctoral Contract?

Where the term of the research funded project is less than 12 months duration, the PI can with the authorization of the Head of School/Head of College and the Research Accountant, offer a non standard contract in accordance with the University Contract Management Policy for Research staff.

Q.9 How will the cohort of existing research staff be aligned to the University Research Career Structure?

The existing cohort of research staff will be mapped to the new policy framework to include, the research career structure and salary scales on the renewal of their contract. HR will contact the Principal Investigator 2-3 months before the contract expiry date to provide support on the new process for a research contract renewal. HR will provide advice and guidance to the Principal Investigator on the alignment to the new policy framework and the completion of a post proposal form.

Q.10 What are the contract options for a Research Fellow and Senior Research Fellow?

The Research Fellow and Senior Research Fellow will have usually successfully obtained independent research funding. A fixed-term specified purpose contract will be offered which will be linked to the completion of their research area/project. Direct entry through competition can also occur at this level.

Q.11 What are the contract options for other research related roles i.e. admin/technical?

The Principal Investigator should contact HR in this regard to discuss such research related roles.

Q.12 What is the University Salary Policy for Research Staff?

The University is moving towards a more structured and transparent approach to salary determination for research staff. This alignment can only occur over time, to ensure that there is no unintended impact on funding for existing projects.

The 2011 IUA Scales will be used for research projects where the funding provided allows for that. The 2011 IUA salary scales will be set up in Payroll and contract research staff will be placed on a point on the scale and progressed with annual increments, without any detriment to existing research staff. Principal Investigators will be required to budget to provide for annual increments. At the time of the contract renewal HR will discuss the contract with the PI to consider the alignment to the IUA Salary Scale.

For awards with designated fixed salaries e.g. Marie Curie, IRCHSS, IRCSET etc, payments will continue to be according to the award guidelines.

Q.13 What is required to request a Salary Increment for a Researcher?

Payment of any salary increments should be provided for in the research contract of employment.

Q.14 What is needed to change a salary cost centre?

On occasion, it may be necessary to alter the funding source listed on a research contract. Please follow the steps below if you wish to change or replace an existing code or split a payment between a number of codes.

Step 1: The PI downloads, completes and returns a Research Funded Cost Code Change Form.

Step 2: The PI should ensure the form is signed by all relevant parties

Step 3: The PI sends the - Change in cost code form to UCC HR.

Note: A change in the Research Account Number will mean that verification is required from the UCC Research Accounts Office.

Q.15 What needs to be done to manage the expiry of a research contract.

Researchers who intend to resign from their position prior to its end date should follow the steps outlined in the [UCC Resignation Policy](#). Principal Investigators

should follow the steps outlined in the relevant section of the UCC Contract Management Policy for advice on managing the expiry of a fixed term contract.

Q. 16 What are the Payroll Deadlines?

Documents must reach UCC HR by the 20th of the month prior to the month of payment/end or adjustment e.g. for payment at the end of November, the deadline is 20th October. Documents must be fully signed and approved before they are sent to the Department of Human Resources.

Note: It is important for all parties to note that advances will not be issued to employees whose contract is submitted after the payroll deadline and payment will be made in the following month's payroll.