

# Mapping Research Career Paths

## The Project

Academic career paths are as varied as research itself. And when starting out an academic career, it's incredibly valuable to know how senior colleagues reached their positions. By learning more about the routes that our Principal Investigators took in their careers, we hope that early career researchers will have a better understanding of the steps they need to take to progress along the academic career ladder.

Katja Gehmlich undertook a survey of a sample of Principal Investigators in the Radcliffe Department of Medicine, as part of an Oxford Learning Institute course on Academic Leadership Development. Principal Investigators were asked questions such as:

**What were the three most important steps in your career?**

**What is the best thing you've done in your career?**

**In hindsight, is there anything you would have done differently?**

**What are your thoughts on work-life balance?**

Answers were collected between December 2015 and February 2016. Seven females and nine males took part, comprised of six clinical scientists and ten basic scientists.

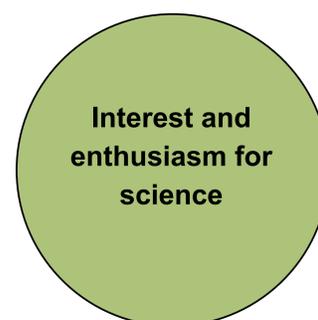
## Key themes in career paths

A number of key themes — positive and negative — emerged from research career paths.

### Positive forces



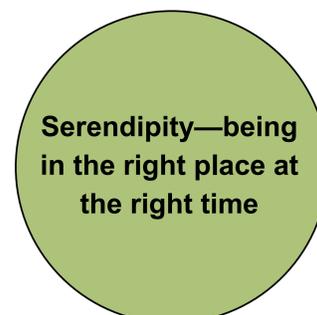
'Followed the advice of mentors who encouraged me to apply for posts, jobs and prizes I would not have considered.'



'What makes a good scientist in my opinion: needs to be a "discovery junkie".'



'Daring to move out into new positions with tough starts, especially from industry back into academia.'



'I had the opportunity of doing a "side project", which generated preliminary data for my fellowship application.'

### Changes in hindsight



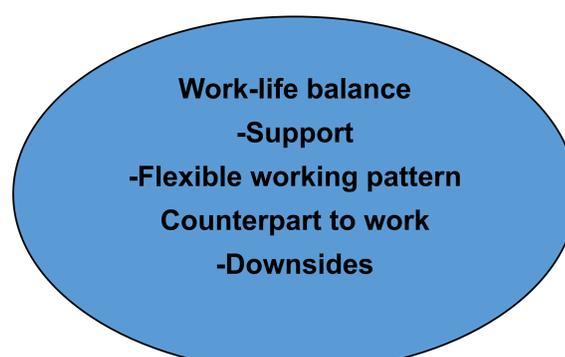
'I wish I had more confidence in my abilities to achieve the steps in my career—starting with my PhD through to now; I am grateful to those who encouraged me when I was doubting my abilities.'



'I would have perhaps have liked to spend a longer period of time working abroad, but this becomes increasingly difficult as time progresses with families and other commitments.'

### Challenges

'Doing things outside of work is important. The academic role can often become "boundary-less" — there is always work that can be done...making sure there are some other avenues through which to channel your energies is important.'

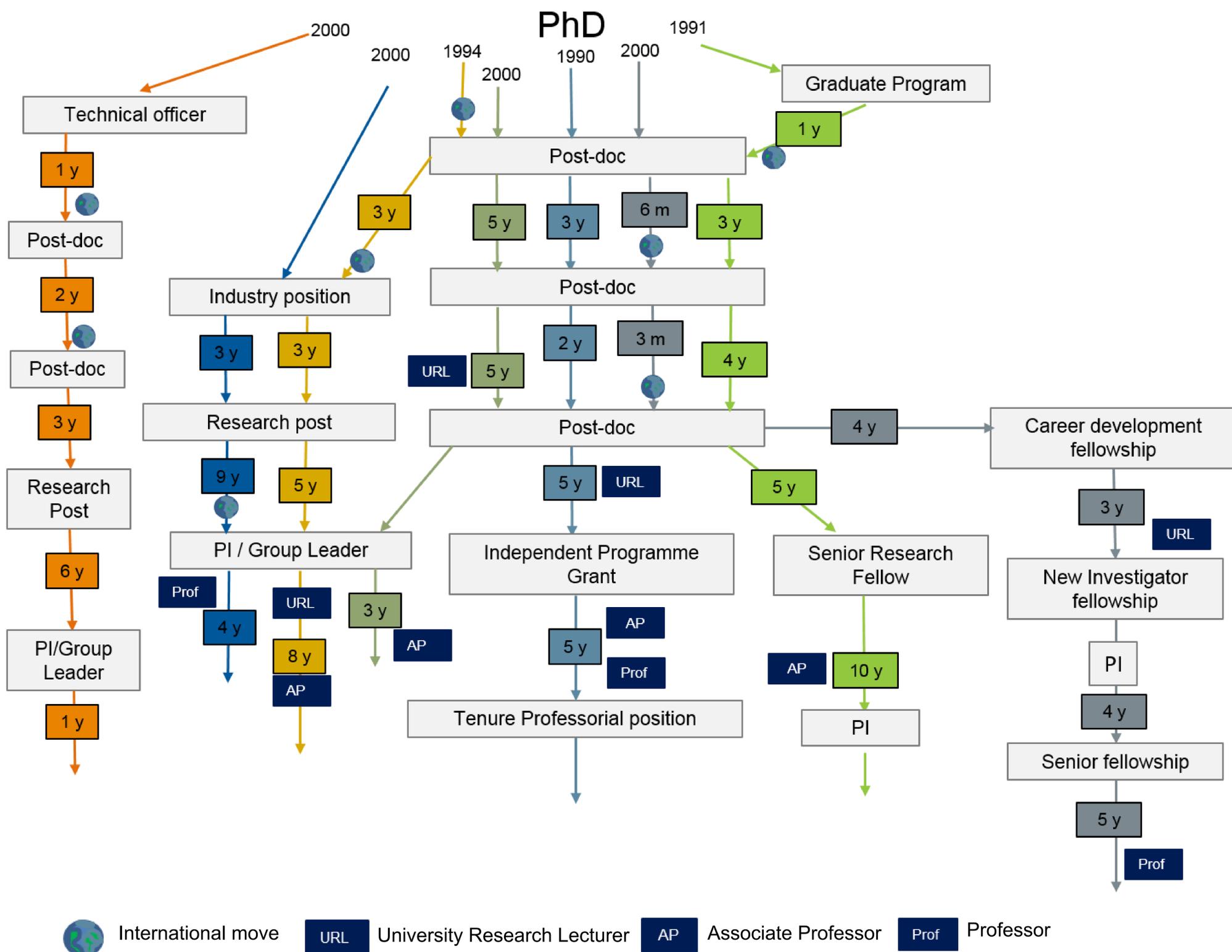


'I have not met a single successful scientist in my field who works regular hours.'

'A supportive partner, good child care and the flexibility of the job help me juggle work and life.'

# Mapping Research Career Paths

We mapped the career paths of seven non-clinical academic researchers who finished their PhDs before the year 2000. Here you can see the paths that they took, including international moves.



Our **Career Development Committee** are now working to make similar maps for clinical academic pathways and for other roles within the Department.

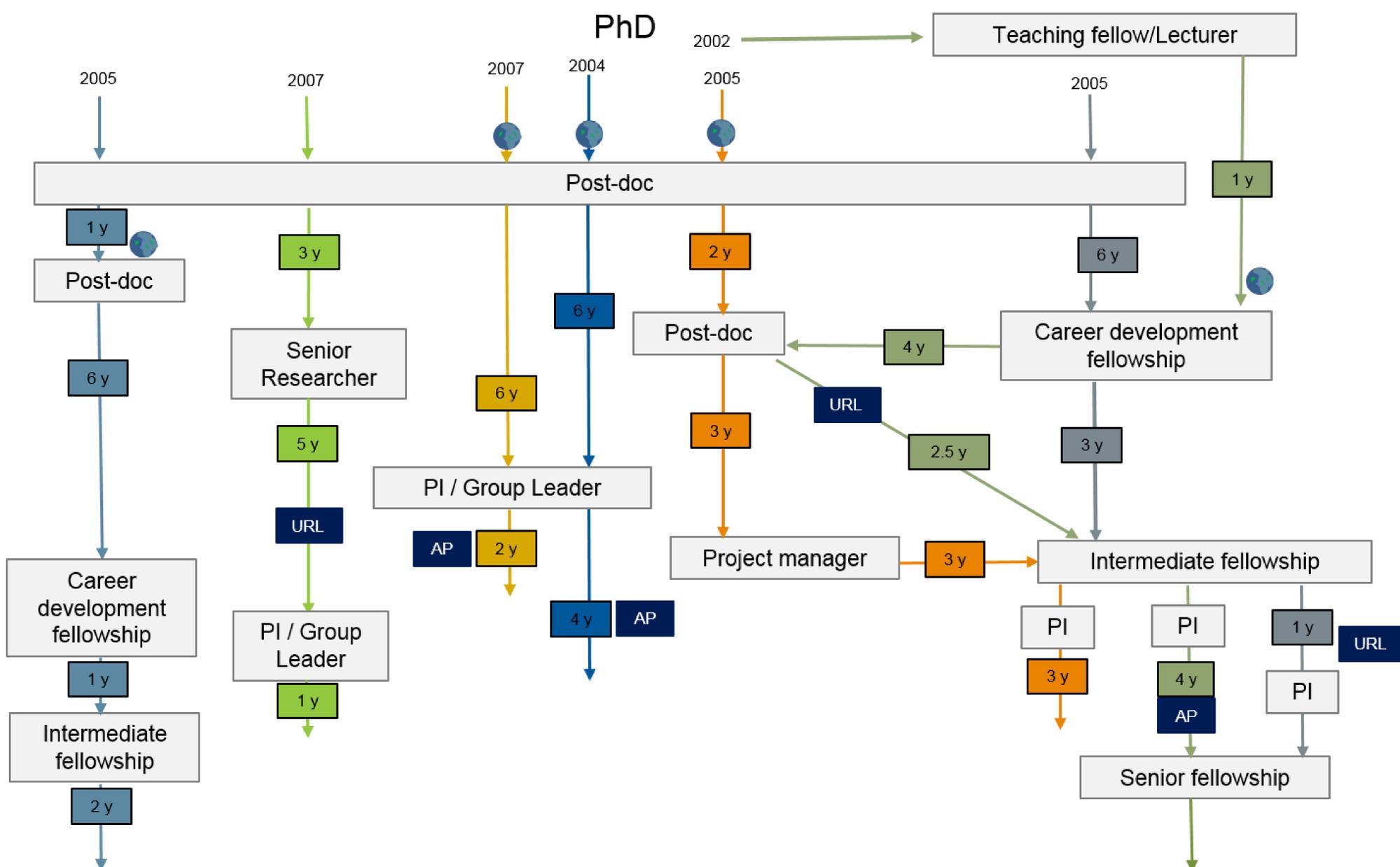
Looking for advice? The **RDM Mentoring Scheme** aims to assist staff and students to achieve personal and professional growth, through a mentoring relationship that provides support as they progress and develop within the University.

Find out more at: <http://www.rdm.ox.ac.uk/mentoring>

For advice on funding opportunities or support with fellowship applications, contact **Ruth McCaffrey** ([ruth.mccaffrey@rdm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.mccaffrey@rdm.ox.ac.uk)), Research Strategy Coordinator for RDM.

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## How long does it take to become a PI?

