



GFZ Meeting on Career Prospects

Motivation

Transparent personnel planning and clarity on contractual and development prospects are the foundation for a responsible hiring and time-limit policy at the GFZ. For postdoctoral researchers who have been employed for two years at GFZ, a meeting on career prospects is strongly recommended. This meeting is part of the GFZ Guideline on Time Limits for Employment Contracts¹. The GFZ considers its role as a career springboard for postdoctoral researchers whose career path usually continues outside the GFZ. Therefore, all postdoctoral researchers get the best possible career support during their years at GFZ. The converting of a fixed-term contract into a permanent contract is possible in individual cases and is regulated in a corresponding guideline².

Meeting objective

At this meeting, the supervisor discusses with the postdoc his/her further career progression at the GFZ. Postdocs need clarity about their development opportunities at the GFZ and sufficient time to build important skills and professional experiences in order to continue to develop in their profession within or outside of the GFZ.

Meeting elements

(1) Systematic progress review of the last 2 years

The progress review is prepared in advance by the supervisor and the postdoc and then discussed together (approx. 1/4 of the meeting time, with a recommended total duration of 1.5 hours).

(2) Finding alignments for the upcoming years

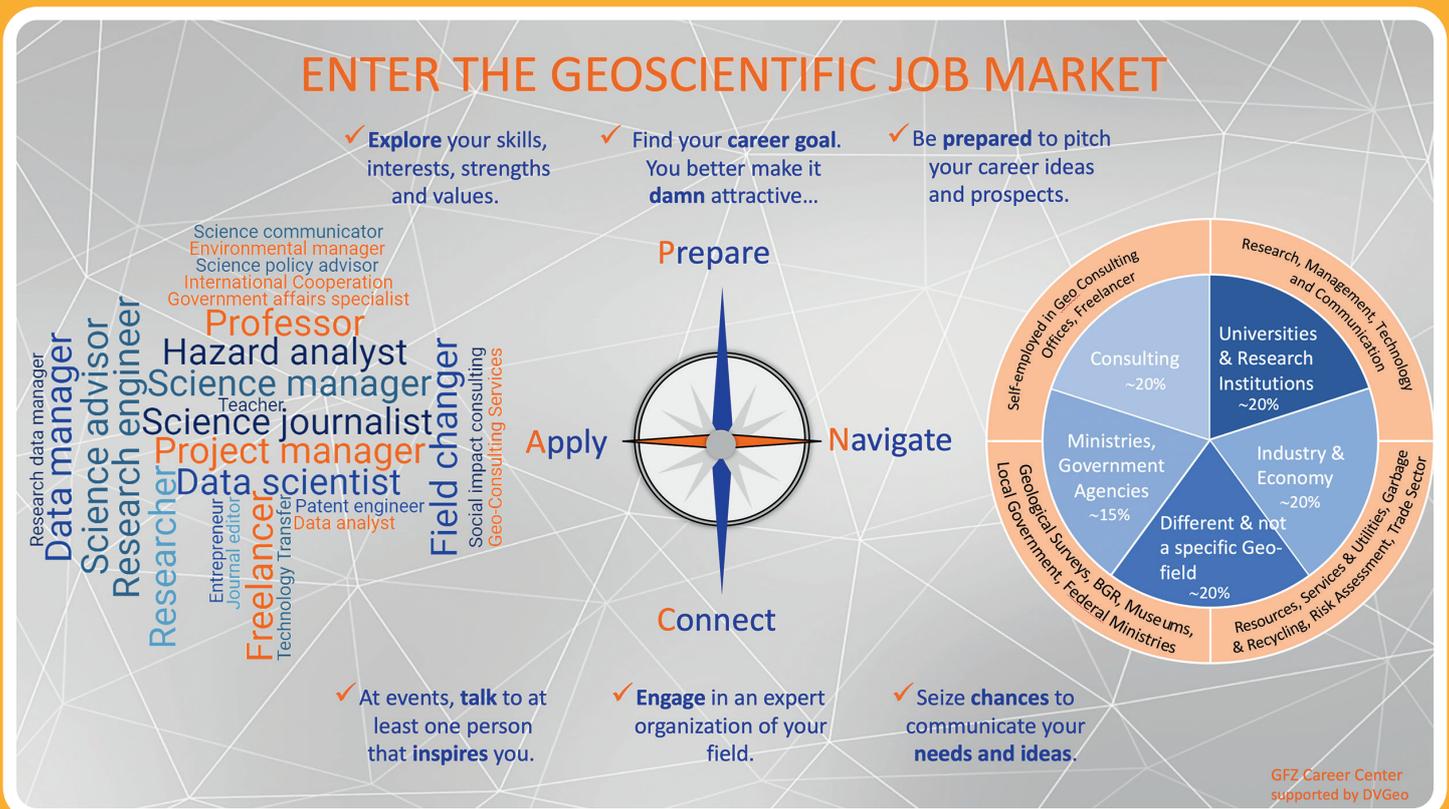
Several career perspectives are discussed consistent with the experiences, skills, interests and job preferences of the postdoc. In addition to pursuing a scientific career, a Plan B should also be considered (approx. 1/2 of the meeting time).

(3) Written agreements between supervisor and postdoc

Here, future goals and offers of support are jointly documented in writing (approx. 1/4 of the meeting time). The supervisor discusses with the postdoc his/her further career progression at the GFZ and composes a binding statement which indicates the planning for a further four years at the GFZ or the planning for a targeted removal of time-limits.

Confidentiality and commitment

The success of the meeting on career prospects depends substantially on a thorough preparation, openness of both discussion partners and a confidential handling of the contents of the discussion.



¹ <http://intranet.gfz-potsdam.de/en/topics/policies-and-forms/internal-regulations/human-recources/gfz-guideline-on-time-limits-on-employment-contracts/>

² <http://intranet.gfz-potsdam.de/en/topics/policies-and-forms/internal-regulations/human-recources/guidelines-for-the-conversation-to-permanency-of-employment-contracts/>



Before Discussion: Systematic Progress Review

This first step serves to systematically review your progress towards building and strengthening your academic portfolio. For this purpose, postdoc and supervisor should prepare independently of each other by using this checklist.

Review questions for the postdoc

My self-evaluation of the last 2 years regarding...

- Progress towards scholarly goals at GFZ:
- Progress towards becoming an independent researcher:
- Publications (submitted, accepted):
- Grants (funded, submitted, contributed):
- Management and leadership skills (including supervision of doctoral researches or students):
- Technical and methodological skills:
- Teaching activities:
- Collaborative skills (workshop organization, working groups, chair activities):
- Communication and presentation skills:
- Prizes and awards:
- Further interests:

My long-term scientific vision and motivation:



Review questions for the supervisor

He or she fully or partially met expectations during the last 2 years regarding...

- Progress towards scholarly goals at GFZ:
- Progress towards becoming an independent researcher:
- Publications (submitted, accepted):
- Grants (funded, submitted, contributed):
- Management and leadership skills (including supervision of doctoral researches or students):
- Technical and methodological skills:
- Teaching activities:
- Collaborative skills (workshop organization, working groups, chair activities):
- Communication and presentation skills:
- Prizes and awards:
- Further strengths:

My suggestions for her or his improvement and growth:





Under Discussion: Finding Alignments

The long-term decision to pursue a scientific career should be based on an open and objective assessment of one's achievements in science so far. Take your time to discuss the results of the progress review first and find alignments for career development in- and outside academia.

Questions for self-reflection

Progress review and reality check

- What scientific priorities should I set in the coming year to strengthen my academic portfolio? What skills do I want to develop?
- What perspective do I identify for my research topic?
- What professional development opportunities do I expect as part of my postdoc experience at GFZ?

My career path at GFZ

- Do I want to pursue an academic career?
- Do I want to stay at GFZ with a permanent contract?
- What is my attitude towards a third-party funded career path at GFZ, in particular to the associated risks and uncertainties?
- What kind of job stability do I need?

Further career opportunities in- and outside academia

- At what point does it make sense to consider a career plan B*?
- In which areas outside or close to academia are my qualifications appreciated?
- How do I gain realistic insights into an interesting professional field outside academia?
- Do I want to gain additional experience to build skills outside of those I learn and apply in my group/section?

Career support and networking

- Which contacts could support my professional development?
- What kind of support could the GFZ Career Center give me?

Questions for the supervisor

Progress review and reality check

- What scientific priorities should she/he set in the coming year to strengthen her/his academic portfolio?
- What perspective do I identify for her/his research topic?
- What professional development opportunities do postdocs of my section routinely take advantage of?

Her/his career path at GFZ

- What are the plans for further development of the section at GFZ, considering budget, gender and flexibility issues?
- Is there a realistic chance to get her/his employment contract at the GFZ released from the time limit?
- What is my attitude towards a third-party funded career path at GFZ, in particular to the associated risks and uncertainties?
- What is the time frame for the coming follow-on funding?

Further career opportunities in- and outside academia

- At what point does it make sense to consider a career plan B*?
- In which areas outside or close to academia are her/his qualifications appreciated?
- Where are former members of the section currently employed?
- What opportunities are there to build skills outside of those you will learn and apply in our group/section?

Career support and networking

- Which of my contacts could support her/his professional development?
- What kind of support could the GFZ Career Center give her/him?

* Please consider the questions as optional suggestions. Especially the discussion of a plan B requires a high level of trust between postdoc and supervisor. Alternatively, the GFZ Career Center can provide support here with confidential career counseling.



After We Discussed: Written Agreements

Several research findings show that career success, job satisfaction and productivity of postdoctoral researches is positively connected to creating and writing a career plan. Please therefore process this final step of written career planning carefully.

Jointly elaborated key results of our discussions together:



Recommendations for the next year to further the career goals:



Specific support offers for the further career path:



***Statement on the consideration for the GFZ procedure for permanent employment
(in accordance with the Section Head):***



Both discussion partners commit themselves to the confidential handling of the discussion results. The explicit consent of the postdoctoral researcher is required for the agreements of the meeting to be shared with the Section Head. (Yes / No)

Date, signature of postdoctoral researcher

Date, signature of supervisor