

Personal Plans

In addition to being used during the promotions exercise, documents including the Personal Plan should be used within PDR. Increasingly they are being used by funding bodies (particularly for personal research fellowships).

Personal Plans are not just a statement of what you have done, what you do, how many papers you plan to publish in particular vehicles over the next 2 or 3 years, or a month by month statement of your perceived future activities. These are all rather mechanistic and *do not give insights as to strategy, real and realistic levels of ambition and purpose.*

Thus, there should be 2 **interleaved aspects of a high quality plan.**

First, it should contain an aspirational narrative clearly and succinctly summarising the current (and any unique) skills, experience and linkages of an individual together with their perceived standing within a subject community. Often this will be based on “what has been achieved” (eg; subject advances, key papers, influence on practice, pedagogic developments, training skilled researchers) and will establish how an individual’s proposed future will build on those achievements and environment (e.g. unique access to resources for research, learning, and engagement, to key research networks locally, nationally and internationally). This aspect should demonstrate a clear **personal trajectory and momentum** for your work and, to some extent, answer the question “*what is special about me?*”

However, this should provide an informed backdrop to the **second – and major – strand** which is a framework which clearly establishes the following critical elements:

- **What are the goals which really drive you and, thus, what do you want to achieve?**
 - If research:**
 - Where do the research questions rank in the future of your discipline – are they the most impactful *subject-specific* ones you should be addressing?
 - Given your present status of experience and research environment etc, are the research questions which you are proposing the very best, most ambitious and most relevant *person-specific* ones *you* could address?
 - If Teaching/Learning or Engagement:**
 - How crucial are they to your discipline, and what impact will they have?
 - Given your environment and experience, are they the most relevant and ambitious goals that you could be addressing?
- **How will you achieve these goals?**
 - Philosophy and approach?
 - Sources of funding?
 - Infrastructure and enablement (i.e. do you need access to unique facilities, sources, other colleagues, either locally, nationally or internationally)?
 - What infrastructural and personal expertise needs do you need to really achieve success and how will these be secured?
 - What would the outputs be and where/how will they appear (and are these optimal)?

- How risky is your approach (is it purely safe predictable research/work or does it carry the possibility of very significant advances but also with a significant risk of possible failure (though learning lessons from that failure)?
- Is your most ambitious/'dream' project likely to need a patchwork of funding/resources from several sources? If so, have you thought how to achieve that?
- **What advances in both the subject, and your standing and abilities, will this make if you were successful?**

In summary, why are you addressing the topics and questions you have chosen, why are they particularly important/exciting/timely/pertinent to you now and for the next period of your career and how will you attempt to succeed? (i.e. *why this, why me, why here, why now, what will be achieved, how will it be achieved, why would that achievement be significant?*)

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