

Career and Development Planning

Why ask people about their career aspirations?

It's always helpful to check in with people about their career aspirations, even if you think you already know where they want to go in their careers. People's circumstances and aspirations often change over time.

If you don't ask, people might think you're not interested, which is a missed opportunity to engage and motivate people.

It's tempting to assume you know what is important to them at any given time. However, it's respectful to enquire about their career intentions at least once a year, as things may have changed since last time.

Knowing where people's career aspirations lie and the skills they are keen to develop can help you with the succession and workforce planning for your team and the broader organisation. This can also help you to think about suitable development opportunities with them.

What if people are happy just doing their job or planning to retire soon?

Even if people don't want to progress or expand the content of their role, they still might want to learn new skills, such as using new technology that enables them to do their current jobs. And you need to explore this with them - they are still part of the organisation and have supported and been supported by Imperial over the years.

Also, if somebody's retiring, they still have a lot to offer to share their knowledge and skills. It's worth asking them about this: 'What's the best way to help pass on your knowledge and experience to others'. Often people care about their legacy - what they'll leave behind.

Exploring Career Aspirations

Here are some support questions for these conversations:

- *What are your career aspirations and ambitions?*
- *How would you like to see your career develop in the next 12 months?*
- *How would you like to see your career develop beyond the next 12 months?*
- *What support do you feel could help you achieve your career aspirations and ambitions?*
- *What appeals to you most about this career direction?*
- *What leads you to want to take your career in this direction?*
- *What skills/knowledge is it essential for you to develop as you progress your career?*
- *What interests you the most and why?*
- *What experience/skills do you already have that will support you as you take this path?*
- *If this particular role is not possible, what alternatives would you consider?*

If people are looking for further guidance on their careers, LDC offers a range of [careers workshops and support](#)

Identifying development needs

Once you have agreed on goals and have a sense of a person's career aspirations, it's important to identify development needs and agree to some development plan.

Before deciding on development options, you both need to be clear about what the person needs to learn and which options will most usefully support work performance and career opportunities.

You'll likely have some ideas for your staff member's development, and it's also respectful and helpful to ask them about their opinions. Here are some questions you can ask to explore possibilities with them.

- *What development needs have arisen as a result of your Objectives, career aspiration/ambition, team/department/ overall College needs?*
- *What specifically do you want to learn about/be able to do?*
- *What difference will this make?*
- *How do you learn best?*
- *What might be the most appropriate method for meeting this need?*
- *What might be the first small step to move this forward?*
- *From whom might you need support to make progress?*
- *By when, realistically, can the development need be met?*

Meeting development needs

When we identify a development opportunity, it's tempting to send people on courses, which may be a fitting solution.

The College also offers flexible and varied options that might fit what they need to know or do more appropriately, considering how they learn and the time and budgets available.

For example, if you want somebody to learn how to carry out recruitment interviews, perhaps they could shadow an expert through the process.

Here are some ideas of the many activities you can propose that either supplement or replace training courses.

- Job-sharing
- Work shadowing
- Reading
- Reviewing documents
- Self-study
- Stretch projects
- [Mentoring](#)
- [Coaching](#)
- Researching key areas
- Observing
- Interviewing others
- Secondments
- Action learning sets
- Seeking out best practice and reporting back
- Additional academic or professional qualifications

- Webinars and online events
- Offering and attending 'Lunch and Learn'
- Or Something else that you come up with together

[People and Organisational Development \(POD\)](#) offers courses, programmes and support to all staff which you can find out about on our website.

[Postdoc and Fellows Development Centre](#) offers tailored support and development to postdocs, fellows and clinicians.