



## Design and Delivery of a Professional Development Qualification for Postdoctoral Researchers

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### Abstract

As typically less than 20% of postdoctoral researchers go on to achieve permanent academic positions, the need to support early career researchers in developing a wide range of transversal skills for success in their career development journey is imperative. Postdoctoral employees in Irish Research Institutions are offered a range of professional development on an ad hoc basis, but with no formal qualification or means of assessing competency. We describe the development of a formal qualification designed for postdoctoral researchers employed by the Agricultural state agency in Ireland employing in the region of 60 postdoctoral researchers at any one time. Key competency requirements for postdoctoral researchers described in the literature were used to determine the core topics for the programme. The Professional Diploma consists of nine modules exploring such themes as cross-cultural leadership, supervision and mentoring, commercialisation of research, professionalism in research, data management, academic writing, science communication and career development. The majority of the 12-month programme is delivered online and lectures are supported with content and interviews from leaders and employers in the agri-food sector. Each module has an assignment component. The programme will run for 6 years and during this time up to 180 postdoctoral researchers will have completed the programme. We will share feedback of how this structured programme supports postdoctoral fellows in developing high quality, evidence-based Professional Development Plans to meet the diverse career needs of postdoctoral fellows.

**Keywords:** career; cross-cultural; leadership; mentoring; transversal skills