

UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN



Take charge  
of your postdoc  
career





# Take charge of your postdoc career

At UCPH, it is our ambition to attract talented scholars from all over the world, provide these scholars with valuable research experiences and as part of this enterprise, support our own research activities. To fulfil this ambition, we have employed a large number of PhDs in postdoc positions in recent years. They are an invaluable asset to the university and our research environment.

The majority of our postdocs continue their careers outside UCPH in other professional environments. They join private companies or organisations in the public sector; some set up their own businesses, while others stay in academia undertaking research and teaching. While some UCPH postdocs stay in Denmark, many also pursue careers abroad or back in their home country.

The professional paths of UCPH postdocs have recently been mapped in a postdoc labour market survey conducted by our HR department. Statistics show that postdocs do really well in the job market. Unemployment is low, and most postdocs find jobs fairly quickly in a wide range of professions and industries.

As a postdoc, it is your responsibility to consider and plan your career. As a university, we consider it our responsibility to support you in this enterprise. Essentially, this responsibility lies with your group leader or head of department, who must combine personal competencies with career development in your annual performance and development review.

In addition to presenting the main results from the postdoc labour market survey, this brochure directs you to the kind of career support that UCPH and other partners have to offer. It also provides valuable advice from staff members and former UCPH postdocs.

We hope you will find this brochure helpful and inspiring.

Henrik C. Wegener  
Rector  
January 2018

# The Postdoc labour market survey 2011-2016

## Labour market stats

In 2015, UCPH Central HR conducted an inquiry of the postdoc labour market to get an overview of where postdocs go after they leave UCPH. This inquiry was repeated in late 2017 and these are the new results.

Based on data from Statistics Denmark from 2011-2016, the survey looks into where UCPH postdocs find employment, which type of job they get, how long it takes for them to find it, their wage level, etc.

Here are some key extracts from the 2017 survey. If you wish to review it in greater detail, the survey can be found in the UCPH employee guide under **Career and competence**.

### **Unemployment**

The data shows that unemployment among former UCPH postdocs is relatively low, and that they manage to find employment fairly soon after their position expires.

### **Salary**

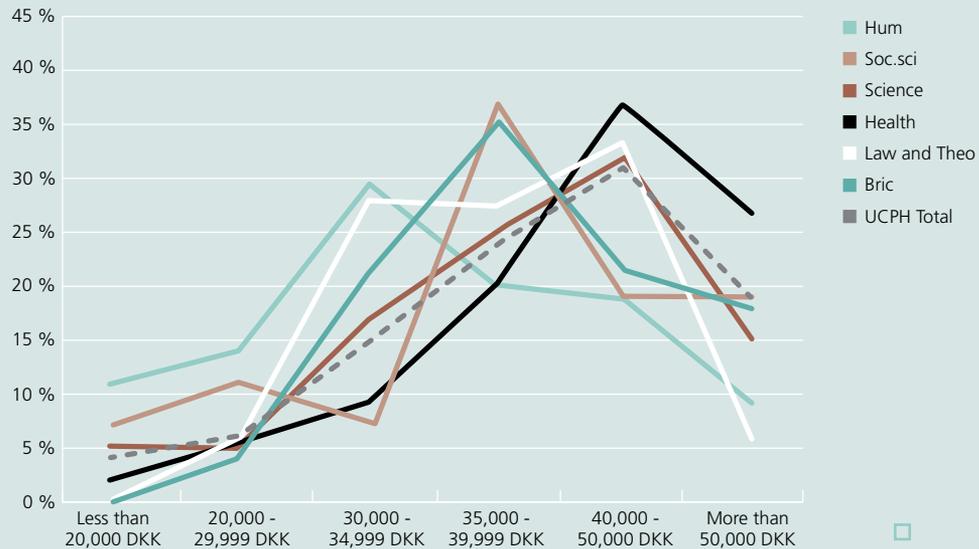
When it comes to the general wage levels among former UCPH postdocs, the data reflect a dissimilarity among faculties – with postdocs from HEALTH topping the scale. Compared to average wage levels, however, the majority of UCPH postdocs find well-paid jobs. 1000 DKK has a fixed value of 134.33 EUR.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT

### Unemployment period for postdocs 2011-2016



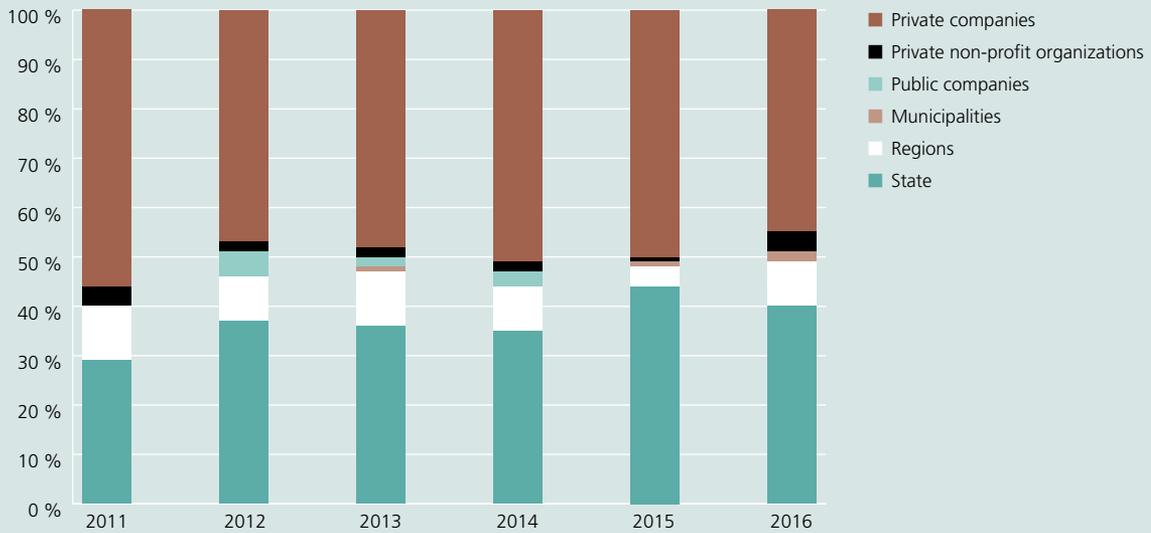
### Wage levels for postdocs (2011-2016) – by faculty



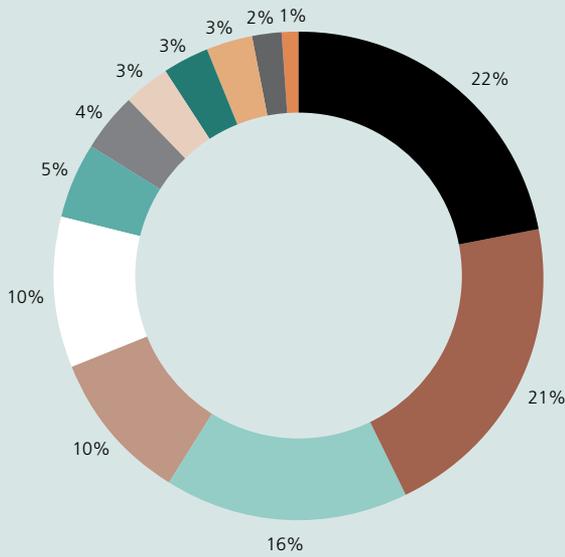
**Sectors and industries**

As the charts show, half of the postdocs find jobs at private companies in a diverse field of industries, half at public institutions that include universities and hospitals.

The sectors where postdocs find employment

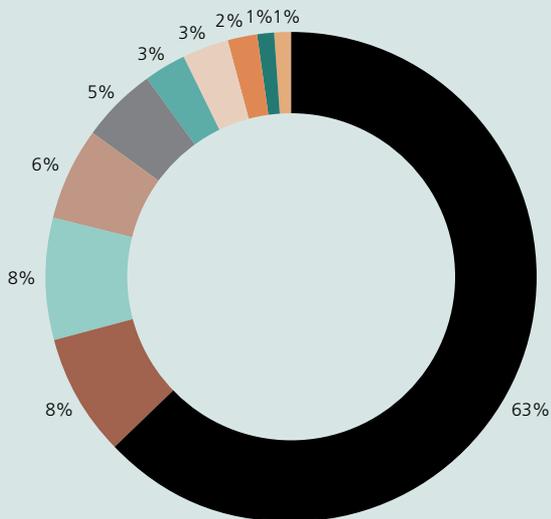


CAREER DEVELOPMENT



The industries where postdocs from HEALTH, SCIENCE and BRIC find employment

- Higher education
- Pharmaceutical industry
- Research and development
- Hospitals
- Industry and manufacturing
- Sales
- Public administration, education and health
- Information and communication
- Wholesale, retail and transportation
- Finance and insurance
- Business colleges and high schools
- Arts, entertainment and recreation



The industries where postdocs from HUM, SOC. SCI., LAW and THEO find employment

- Higher education
- Arts, entertainment and recreation
- Public administration, education and health
- Research and development
- Information and communication
- Business colleges and high schools
- Adult education
- Hospitals
- Sales
- Wholesale, retail and transportation

# Career insights from UCPH postdocs



## Jeppe Linnet

Anthropologist, PhD. Head of Perspectives & Innovation at Wilke A/S, a consultancy that conducts market research and user studies, and facilitates business- & product development. Previously self-employed for three years in my own consultancy, Linnet Research.



### Which competencies, acquired during your postdoc, do you use in your current job?

- Specialised academic skills. Research and analysis – they are part of my core offering to clients.
- Get to the real problem fast. My experience as a PhD supervisor has taught me to ‘cut to the chase’ and identify the real issues that clients need to address.
- Communicative skills: Teaching has given me the ability to convey complex methods and perspectives clearly to a non-specialist audience.
- ‘Out-of-the-box’ thinking: Basic research has taught me to dig deeper and see things from a different perspective. This is particularly useful when clients come to me with complex issues.

### Jeppe’s advice to postdocs

- Prepare to move outside academia. You might not be able to pursue a research career at university. Turn this into something positive – an opportunity.
- What’s your value proposition? Work out what kind of value you could bring to an organisation – based on your specialist knowledge and your experience in managing complex research processes.
- Network. Connect with organisations and companies that work in a field you’re interested in. Don’t just stay on their website. Reach out to them and set up meetings. This is the only way to get a real sense of what they do, how they work, and how you might be of value to them.
- Consider self-employment. If you decide to set up your own business, get the right support from the start. When it comes to business models, it’s not ‘one size fits all’. I got great support from Væksthus Copenhagen.

*A career in helping companies innovate and understand their customers allows me to combine my academic skills with the expertise I acquired as a consultant prior to my PhD and postdoc studies.*

## Maria Waldhoer

Chief Scientific Officer of InterAx Biotech, a Start-Up company and spinoff from ETH Zürich and the Paul Scherrer Institute, Switzerland. Maria is in the management board and in charge of R&D. InterAx is developing different assets for the discovery of functionally selective drugs with improved efficacy and reduced side effects for G-Protein coupled Receptors (GPCRs).



### Which competencies, acquired during your postdoc, do you use in your current job?

- Core science competencies: Research, analytical skills and especially time management are fundamental to the work I do.
- Networking and collaborative skills: I gained a huge network during my postdoc years and my 6+ years as a specialist at Novo Nordisk A/S.

### Maria's advice to postdocs

- Build a strong network: Your knowledge is valuable to companies; but so is your network. Nurture your contacts and expand your network as much as you can.
- Be a team player: To work in an organisation – large or small, public or private – you need to be good at teamwork. The organisation is not looking for lone riders; they are looking for team players who are open, constructive, and able to work towards a common goal.
- Time management: In both big pharma and small biotech, good time management is one of the most essential skills you need to have. Tight deadlines and impromptu tasks require flexible time resources – and if you want to have a 'life' next to your job, you need to make sure you can prioritize and often also delegate tasks well.
- Share your knowledge with the world. Publish. Give talks. Organise events. Spread your knowledge – tell the world what you do.

*I got my current job because of my extensive network, but also because of my expertise from working in both an academic setting and as well as in a large pharmaceutical company like Novo Nordisk.*

## Susanne den Boer

Research Adviser at the Office of Research and Innovation, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, UCPH. Susanne works with funding support and research data management.



*I really enjoyed being a researcher. But after moving country three times and starting a family, my priorities changed. I felt I needed more stable career prospects, and actively pursued a new challenge in a related field.*

### Which competencies, acquired during your postdoc, do you use in your current job?

- Writing skills: Writing articles, reviewing papers and being the editor of a journal have taught me to write clear and compelling texts. A really useful skill in my kind of job.
- Applying for funding: Having applied for a number of postdoc fellowships, I believe I know what makes a good proposal. I use these insights to help other researchers improve theirs.
- Organisational skills: As a postdoc I organised conferences, seminar series, outreach activities, fieldwork trips, etc. These experiences have given me the confidence and organisational skills to coordinate various types of activities at the faculty.
- Presentation skills. Like most postdocs, I've presented my research at many conferences. These skills come in handy when I conduct grant-writing workshops for postdocs and teach data management to PhD students.

### Susanne's advice to postdocs

- Get transferrable skills. If you know you're not going to stay in research or academia after your postdoc, make sure to get transferable skills on your CV (e.g. be the editor of a journal, organise a conference, engage in various outreach activities, etc.). This will qualify you for a wider range of jobs.
- Talk to people. Check out what other former postdocs have done. Ask them how they got their job – and what they like about it.
- Get CV training. Learn how to write a CV and cover letter for non-academic jobs. Your researcher CV might not be suitable if you're applying for jobs outside of academia.

## Emil Frederik Lundbjerg Møller

Strategy Consultant at the Danish Broadcasting Cooperation (DR). Emil assists the Director of Media and the heads of DR's channels in developing action plans on how to improve DR's channels and content.



### Which competencies, acquired during your postdoc, do you use in your current job?

- Complex thinking. At times, my job involves fairly complex conceptual work. This can be very demanding intellectually and calls for good analytical skills.
- Communication skills. My job also involves a number of tasks that require good writing and communication skills.

### Emil's advice to postdocs

- Career planning is a work in progress. Planning what you want to do after your postdoc takes time and careful thought. So don't leave this to the very end of your postdoc tenure. You'll be too busy finalising projects and tasks.
- Think carefully about what you like and don't like in your current line of work. Consider what you enjoy – and what you miss – in your current professional life and look for professions that match your preferences.
- Check out job listings for inspiration. Have an open mind when it comes to industries and professions. You might be surprised to see where the interesting opportunities can be found and where your qualifications can take you.

*I was probably a wild card among the applicants for this job. I had no prior experience with the media industry or strategy development. But I think my boss was more interested in skills than knowledge, and perhaps she was also curious to see if someone with my kind of background could be of value to DR.*



## Tune Pers

Associate Professor, Novo Nordisk Foundation Center for Basic Metabolic Research, University of Copenhagen. Tune also holds a position as a senior scientist at Statens Serum Institute. Tune directs a research group that consists of three PhD students, two postdocs and an assistant professor.



### Which competencies, acquired during your postdoc, do you use in your current job?

- Core science competencies: Thinking analytically and being curious are fundamental prerequisites to the work I do as a scientist.

*If you want to pursue a career as a researcher, focus on one key expertise, work hard and prioritize working with pleasant people. A laser sharp focus is paramount if you want to excel in science.*

### Tune's advice to postdocs

- Go abroad. If you wish to stay in research, apply for a position at one of the best universities in your field. Stay there until you have consolidated your competencies. Remember to maintain your network whilst you're away – for example, by returning home to give research talks and seminars.
- Focus on an up-and-coming research area. Doing this at a leading international university will give you a unique skill set, and thus leading edge compared to national researchers. Consequently you will constitute an attractive candidate for future research career grants and job positions – within as well as outside academia.
- Work with people that are smarter than you. Learn how they think and act, and prepare yourself for your future career – as an independent researcher, group leader, or any other position that involves responsibility and leadership.



# Where to go for guidance?

If you need help planning your career, advice on how to upgrade your skills, or insight into different career opportunities, there are a number of places to go and resources to tap into. Inside and outside UCPH.

**Performance and Development Review** (in Danish, 'medarbejderudviklingsamtale' or 'MUS' for short). All postdocs are entitled to a MUS interview with their superior once a year. Career development is a key issue in this interview.

**Mentor programme** Some of the faculties have mentor programmes. You can also find a good mentor yourself outside the university.

**Skills courses** The faculties offer a range of different skills courses for postdocs on topics such as writing skills, CVs, grant applications, research project proposals, etc.

**Leadership courses** A course series that focuses on issues such as leadership in academia, team leadership, types of leadership, leading change, etc.



**UCPH career workshops and events** The faculties and departments arrange workshops on a wide range of career-related topics.

**Industry meets academia** Workshops, visits and matchmaking events with private and public organisations, highlighting ongoing collaborations and career opportunities for postdocs in companies and the public sector.

**Career coaching and ‘after-work’ meetings** Trade associations such as Magisterforeningen and DJØF offer one-to-one career coaching and arrange meetings to discuss career prospects outside academia. Check the trade unions’ websites for more information.

*If you want to learn more about any of these options, please look at the intranet (KUnet) in the Employee Guide under “Career and competence” or ask your department or faculty. If the activity is not already offered, you can help start them up.*

What's on  
at your  
faculty –  
and what's  
your  
advice to  
postdocs?



## Mette Sandbye

Professor and Head of Department, The Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, which employs 20-30 postdocs.



### Career development activities for postdocs at The Department of Arts and Cultural Studies and the Faculty of Humanities:

- Individual staff development interviews (once a year) and group development interviews (1-2 sessions a year).
- Follow-up interviews with postdocs who have not been successful in obtaining in-house positions.
- Career and Competence Development seminar for postdocs at the Faculty of Humanities – with five former UCPH postdocs sharing job experience and career advice.
- Facebook group for postdocs at The Department of Arts and Cultural Studies – a platform for sharing job ads and career advice.
- Lunch clubs for postdocs and PhDs.

### Mette's advice to postdocs

- Map your competencies. Get a clear overview of your skills and competencies – identifying those that are very specific and related to your field, and those that are more general.
- Look at the job market from a broader perspective. Imagine yourself outside academia, even outside Denmark. What interests you?
- A new research project? Consider whether you wish to apply for funding for a collaborative research project. This may extend your affiliation to academia or qualify you for a position in a particular industry.
- Don't lose faith. Postdocs do get jobs!

*A postdoc position is not a move away from the regular job market – or a free pass to an ivory tower. It's a move up on the competence ladder – just like any other job.*

## Hussam Hassan Nour-Eldin

Associate Professor at DynaMo Center of Excellence, The Department of Plant and Environmental Sciences (PLEN). Hussam leads a research group within plant transport processes that consists of, among others, two postdocs.



### Career development activities for postdocs at PLEN:

- Individual staff development interviews (once a year).
- Initiatives to increase the visibility of postdocs (e.g. support in boosting their publication activities and their participation at conferences and other speaking events).
- Training sessions on how to write successful grant and job applications.

### Hussam's advice to postdocs

- Inside or outside academia? Consider whether you want to stay in academia or seek employment elsewhere. As a postdoc, you are an attractive candidate for a wide range of companies and organisations.
- Prepare grant applications in good time. If you want to pursue a research career, make sure you prepare grant applications long before your postdoc expires. Grant authorities can take over a year to process and reply to applications.
- Complete the post-graduate teacher's training course. This course will improve your teaching skills and help you qualify for most permanent posts at university.

*Take your research abroad. It's a unique chance to boost your knowledge, extend your network, and expose yourself to a different culture. A period abroad is an attractive credential on any CV.*

## Jesper B. Andersen

Associate Professor and group leader of the Andersen Group at Biotech Research and Innovation Centre (BRIC). Jesper's team employs, among others, eight postdocs with speciality in molecular biology and bioinformatics.



*A postdoc is a training position. The postdocs in my team get to write grant proposals; and they also get to set up collaborative projects, which drives them into active networking. As such, I am in continuous dialogue with all members of my team about their scientific projects and their career plans.*

### Career development activities for postdocs at BRIC

- Individual staff development interviews (once a year).
- The Postdoc Career Programme (PCP) was initiated by group leaders at BRIC in 2015. Postdocs were part of the design of this programme and are actively represented in the PCP committee chaired by Jesper. Currently, PCP offers courses in career development and transferable skills to cultivate the individual's proficiency in communication, management and leadership, negotiation tactics, clarity of scientific writing and CV presentation.
- Training in writing grant proposals, involvement in organising collaborative projects and public outreach.

### Jesper's advice to postdocs

- Be active, do not be afraid to seek help. Take charge of your career. If you're not clear about what happens next, talk to people. Don't hesitate to contact somebody you think may be able to help – inside or outside your department.
- Add the missing pieces. Nurture the qualifications that are missing on your CV. This is hard work, but early planning helps.
- Go abroad. Get out of your comfort zone and experience how science is practiced elsewhere. This will broaden your professional and personal horizons and boost your international network.
- Network. Don't hide away in the library or the laboratory. Connect with people. At your department, at meetings, conferences, etc. Remember to take advantage of your mentors' extensive network in his/her research area.



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