

# CAREER SUPPORT FOR RESEARCHERS IN EARLY CAREER STAGES

Experiences from the career-support development programme KUPP  
at the Centres of Excellence at the University of Oslo 2018–2019

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## 1. Introduction

The University of Oslo (UiO) and other Norwegian and European universities are at present striving to provide better and more systematic support for researchers in early stages of their career. We here take the *early career researchers* (ECRs) to include all researchers in temporary positions such as PhD students, postdoctoral fellows, and researchers on time-limited funding; we will also refer to these as *young researchers*. The need for an active career support of ECRs has become more apparent and universally recognized with the increasing number of researchers in temporary positions and the increased competition for permanent positions in academia. Indeed, most ECRs must now find relevant use for their qualifications outside universities and outside academia. At the same time, developments in the knowledge society have strengthened the university's role as a provider of top-qualified candidates and innovation capacity for the society as a whole. Universities are expected to support their ECRs by raising awareness of the job market and by preparing them for multiple career paths inside and outside academia.

This report summarizes important experiences from working systematically on developing a better and more reflective career support for ECRs in their own local research environments—in particular, at the Centres of Excellence (CoEs) supported by the Research Council of Norway. Clearly, much of the university's career support must be provided at other organizational levels – at the institutional level, at the faculty level, or at the departmental level. Indeed, at the UiO, work is in progress to develop a comprehensive university-wide system of career support, clarifying the tasks and responsibilities at each level of organization. Nevertheless, the ECRs local research environments must play a key role in career support as the primary environment for development of professional qualifications, competences, skills, network, and contacts to the national and international job market.

This report focuses on the role of the local research environment within the total career support system of the University of Oslo. The experiences presented here are outcomes from the collaborative project KUPP ('KarriereUtviklingsPilotProgram' — Career Development Pilot Programme), initiated by the Hylleraas Centre for Quantum Molecular Sciences and involving now all active CoEs at UiO.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The CoEs participating in the KUPP programme are:

- CanCell: Centre for Cancer Cell Reprogramming
- CEED: Centre for Earth Evolution and Dynamics
- HTH: Hybrid Technology Hub
- Hylleraas Centre for Quantum Molecular Sciences
- MultiLing: Center for Multilingualism in Society across the Lifespan (2019)
- NORMENT: Norwegian Centre for Mental Disorders Research
- PluriCourts: Centre for the Study of the Leg. Roles of the Judiciary in the Global Order (2018)
- RITMO: Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Rhythm, Time and Motion
- RoCS: Rosseland Centre for Solar Physics

These CoEs and similar research-intensive research environments are characterized by a large number of ECRs. In November 2018, the total number of ECRs at the participating CoEs was 315. The CoEs are therefore critically dependent on the contribution of their young researchers to achieve their research goals and visions for their centres. At the same time, these young researchers need to qualify themselves for their own careers, noting that many will eventually pursue careers outside academia, often after several years of uncertainty, in fierce competition for the few vacancies that become available for permanent positions at universities and research institutions.

In 2018, the CoEs at the University of Oslo recognized the need to improve and strengthen the career support for their ECRs as sufficiently urgent to initiate the KUPP project, with the aim to raise awareness of the various responsibilities and roles in career support, to develop and exchange ideas on an improved, more systematic career support, to identify best practices, and to clarify the way forward. At the two one-day KUPP workshops in the autumn of 2018, a common understanding and a shared framework for career development were established, as were the priorities for actions towards improved career support for the coming year; see the [2018 KUPP Report](#).

One year later, in November 2019, the KUPP participants reconvened for a third workshop, to share experiences, receive feedback on implemented actions, and to prepare for the next step in career support development. The KUPP participants unanimously decided to continue cooperation and to push forward on career development in 2020, putting themselves under pressure to stay focused and make further progress.

The present report is based on short self-assessments submitted by each CoE in preparation for the workshop, on oral presentations given by each CoE at the workshop, on the group work, and on plenary discussions at the workshop. Some key elements of the 2018 KUPP Report are included for convenience, bearing in mind that the first report was written in Norwegian.

The report is primarily intended to provide useful documentation and act as a reference for the participating CoEs in their ongoing career development work as well as point of departure for the next KUPP workshop. The report should also be of interest for other, similar research groups and environments, who recognize the need for improved career support and are taking the first steps towards achieving this goal. Finally, we hope the report will be useful for leaders, decision makers, and career-support units at all levels of the university organization concerned with career support. We were happy to see that the 2018 KUPP Report was met with interest also beyond CoEs at the University of Oslo and hope the present report will likewise be of inspiration and benefit to others.

The bulk of this report consists of three sections. Section 2 describes the framework and tools that have proved useful for developing a shared understanding and a more systematic, reflective approach to career support. In Section 3, we summarize experiences from the various measures and actions for career support implemented and tested at the CoEs during 2019. This section also gives an outline of the status and items put on the agenda for the further work on career development within the KUPP project. Finally, in Section 4, we highlight some general learning points to be aware of when preparing for a more active career support and some points that should receive special attention when following up on the newly approved [Standards for UiO's Career Support for Early Career Researchers](#). The programme for the KUPP 2019 workshop is appended to this report.

## 2. Framework and tools for a reflective and systematic career support

To make any progress on the development of career support, a common framework of concepts, models and tools must be agreed upon. Without such a framework, it becomes difficult to reach a shared understanding of activities, measures, roles, and responsibilities in the development of career support. Such a framework was agreed upon by the KUPP participants in 2018 and applied by all in their work for improved career support in 2019. In the following, we review the important points of the framework, which has become an indispensable reference frame for all KUPP work.

### 2.1 Three phases of career support

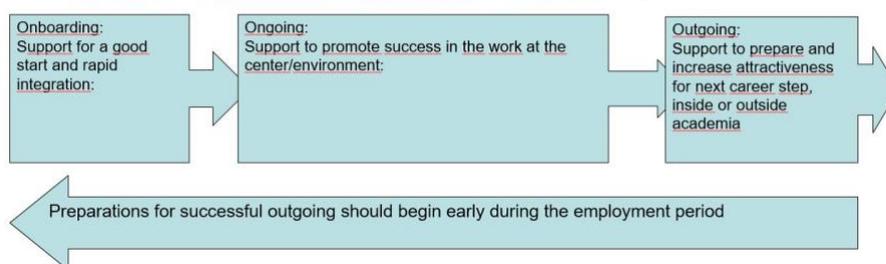
For ECRs, hired on a temporary basis at a CoE or elsewhere, we may distinguish three phases of employment: **onboarding, ongoing, and outgoing**. For these three phases, the purpose and emphasis of career support are different:

- **onboarding career support:** promote rapid integration into the environment with an appreciation for its goals and ambition and provide an effective start of her/his own work
- **ongoing career support:** promote progress and success in the working environment and encourage the development of new professional and nonprofessional skills
- **outgoing career support:** raise awareness of different career pathways and increase the attractiveness and readiness for next career step, inside or outside academia

This simple three-phase model was useful in establishing a systematic approach to career support, for categorizing support activities, for setting up priorities, and assessing the stronger and weaker aspects of actions taken. However, these phases are not disconnected but should be understood as a coherent whole—for example, measures taken to improve outgoing should be initiated early during the employment period, not towards the end of the period.

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#### The phases – systematic approach in career support



The KUPP participants recognized that each local CoE carries an overall responsibility for all phases of career support, also when institution-wide career support services exist or are offered by the department or the faculty to which the CoE belongs.

### 2.2 Five dimensions of career support

To arrive at a shared understanding of career support and to raise awareness of their own situation and responsibilities, the KUPP participants defined five dimensions or aspects of career support and formulated questions of self-reflection for each dimension. Reflections along these dimensions helped

the participants understand where the CoEs stand today with respect to career support and to assess the strengths and weaknesses of existing or proposed measures and actions. The five dimensions are:

#### **A: Onboarding support**

- *Dimension:* Procedures, activities, information and cultural norms that contribute to an expeditious integration in the research environment and a rapid start-up of the ECR's own tasks.
- *Self-reflection:* How good are we in supporting the researcher in getting a good start with rapid integration into the research environment?

#### **B: Person-specific support**

- *Dimension:* Routines and actions that ensure a good understanding and appreciation of each researcher's own motivation, own resources, and special needs.
- *Self-reflection:* How good are we at getting to know the individual researcher (background, motivation, situation) so that we can provide the most relevant support?

#### **C: Role understanding**

- *Dimension:* Understanding collective and individual responsibilities in career support and how to make use of other organizational levels' resources and offerings in career support.
- *Self-reflection:* Are we aware of the roles and responsibilities for career support within the university organization and our own role in this organization?

#### **D: Flexible support**

- *Dimension:* Ability to respond to the needs for tailored career support (individual, group-specific, or situation-dependent), drawing on own or external resources.
- *Self-reflection:* How good are we at providing tailored career support to meet the different needs of individuals and groups?

#### **E: Career awareness**

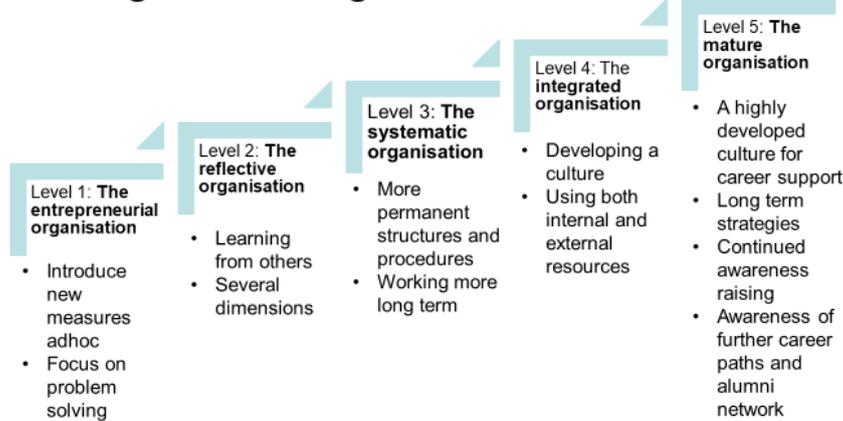
- *Dimension:* Ability to prepare young researches for a wide range of career pathways, also outside of academia, drawing on own resources and those of others.
- *Self-reflection:* Are we aware of the different career opportunities that exist for our young researchers and how do we portray these career opportunities, inside or outside academia?

### **2.3 Five levels of organizational maturity**

At the KUPP workshops in 2018, the participants were presented with a model for characterizing the level of maturity of an organization with respect to career support. The model distinguishes five such levels. At Level 1, the organization is characterized by an ad-hoc approach, lacking routines and providing limited career support; at this lowest level of maturity, support is provided primarily when problems arise and attention is first and foremost on research achievements. At the other end of the scale, at Level 5, career development has become an integral part of the culture of the organization and a collective concern of all, in an inclusive research environment. Career support is continuously

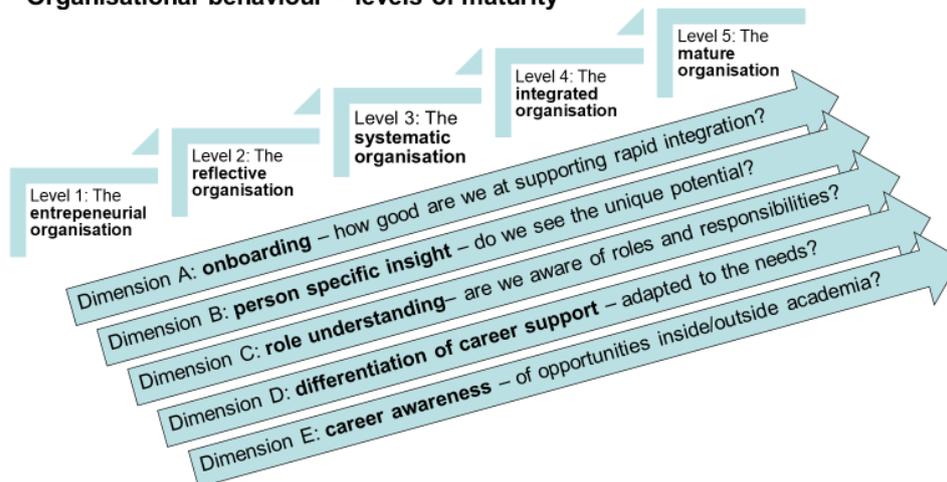
developed along all five dimensions, with a high-level of awareness of different career pathway opportunities.

## Becoming a mature organisation – levels and indicators



Although the model does not pretend to be theoretically well founded, it worked well as a practical reflection tool, helping the participants to observe their own research environment from the outside and enabling them to make a more systematic self-assessment of their environment, as a whole and along each of the five dimensions of career support: Where do we stand? What do we do well? What are our weaknesses? In this way, the participants were able to obtain a clearer view of the road ahead and to make informed decisions regarding measures to be taken and dimensions to focus on.

## Organisational behaviour – levels of maturity



## 2.4 Intrinsic motivation

In a professionally demanding and creative endeavour such as scientific research, the intrinsic motivation is a critically important driving factor for all young researchers. At the outset, the motivation is typically strong, but it can change over time, depending on internal and external factors.



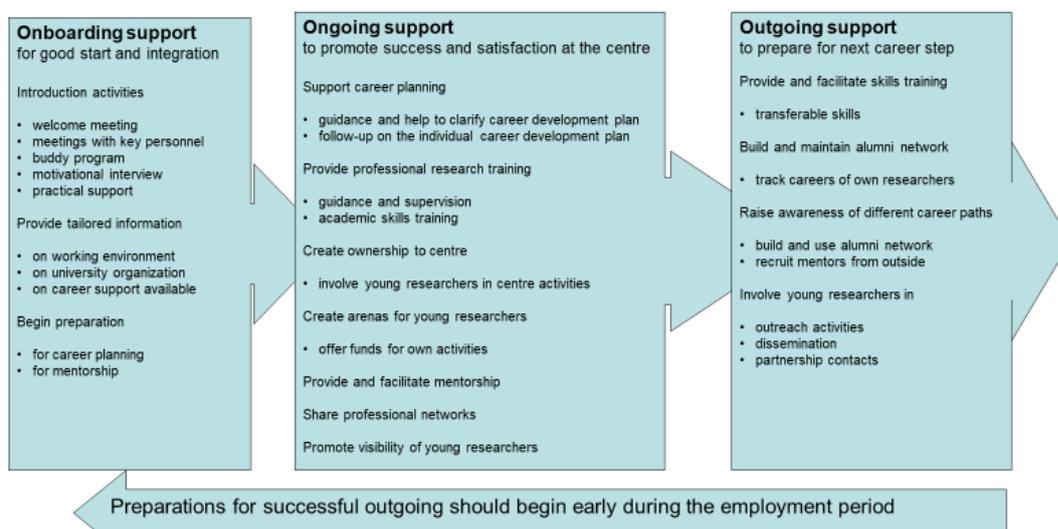
- build an inclusive research community with a shared vision and a sense of belonging
- provide effective and rapid onboarding in the working environment
- provide active supervision with individual follow up in a broad sense
- provide professional research training at the highest level
- build skills and competencies
- share and build professional networks
- facilitate young researchers' own arenas

These shared perspectives and insights from the two workshops in 2018 became the point of departure and shared platform for career support work at the centres over the next year. In particular, the CoEs had identified the following tasks as most urgent for career support improvements:

- strengthen career support as a collective centre responsibility rather than an individual one
- explore and make use of all existing career support services at the university
- work systematically on priority areas, using developed models, concepts and reflection tools
- focus on promoting a good start and rapid integration—early investments give later benefits
- understand the motivation of each young researcher by performing motivation interviews
- set up a mentoring system for the young researchers
- involve the young directly in all centre matters and management, creating an ownership
- improve the training of new skills and competencies
- improve the support for career planning and raise awareness of alternative career paths
- develop and nurture an alumni network as a channel to the job market

The experiences and implemented measures reported at the workshop in 2019 were a direct response to these concerns. In the following, we review and discuss these experiences. Our references to actions and measures from CoEs in the text are examples only and are not exhaustive. The diagram below gives a summary of the measures and actions in the three phases, as discussed in the following.

### The phases – a summary of career support measures



### 3.1 Onboarding

At the first KUPP workshops, it was unanimously agreed that good onboarding is essential, with benefits not only for the young researchers but for the centre as a whole. At the same time, it was recognized that onboarding had so far been carried out in an ad hoc manner and that any systematic approach to onboarding extends beyond an introductory welcome talk and an accompanying information package, although both of these are needed.

Onboarding was therefore given much attention by the KUPP participants in 2019, all of whom introduced several measures and actions for improved onboarding during the year. Some of these measures are low-hanging fruits; others require more effort and may depend on institutional services. Here are some of the onboarding measures introduced by the participants:

- set up a welcome meeting and start-up conversations with leader, supervisor, team leaders
- present new young researchers to the whole centre during seminars or other events
- introduce new young researchers to ECR groups and their arenas
- hold regular special half-day workshops for new young researchers
- arrange practicalities (visa, accommodation, network, employee card) beforehand if possible
- use institutional services such as International Staff Mobility Office (ISMO) when possible
- set up and follow checklists and interview guidelines for onboarding
- involve the buddy system in onboarding of new young researchers
- carry out motivational interviews with new researchers during hiring or as part of onboarding
- allocate and hold first meeting with mentor as part of onboarding
- raise awareness of career development plan already during onboarding
- make information readily available to newcomers, using web, flyers, and slide presentations

Readily available and reliable information is essential not only for successful onboarding but for all phases of employment. The current information available on available courses, training, tools for self-learning, and other internal or external resources relevant to young researchers are perceived as inadequate or poorly organized by the KUPP participants. Indeed, some CoEs (NORMENT, RITMO) have themselves collected such information on the web, using own task forces. The KUPP participants would like to see a stronger institutional effort to collect and organize relevant information on the web.

#### **Motivational interviews**

To provide the best supervision and career support for an ECR, it is important to understand his or her motivation, ambitions, abilities, potentials, and needs. An important tool for achieving this are motivational interviews, carried out by the supervisor or other senior researcher. With the knowledge obtained in this way, supervision and career support can be tailored to the individual young researchers. As part of their homework for the second KUPP workshop in 2018, senior researchers carried out motivational interviews with selected young researchers in their own centres. No detailed guidelines or template were given for the interviews but the interviewers were urged to ask open questions and to stay focussed on the interviewee, setting aside own associations, opinions, and advice.

The experiences from these motivational interviews were very positive: they had been inspirational and rewarding for both parties. Some CoEs have since introduced motivational interviews as part of

the onboarding (Hylleraas). The interviews are either carried out as an integral part of the first employee conversation or separately, noting that employee conversations focus on other matters and may not be carried out by the ECR's supervisor or team leader.

## 3.2 Ongoing

### Career development plans

Individual career planning is first and foremost a personal responsibility—the purpose of career support is to help the individual in this process, to consider the various career options that may be open to them and to offer guidance and training in preparation for the next career step. At the PhD level, this means raising an awareness of the possible career pathways and providing training in transferable skills that will help them reach their goal. For postdocs, a career-development plan is now mandatory for all—the research environment is expected to help set up such plans, to offer training in skills relevant for careers in and out of academia, and to have annual career-growth conversations.

For career-development plans to be meaningful, realistic, and binding for both parties, they should not be developed by the ECR alone but in collaboration with representatives of the centre. In some CoEs, work on career-development plans begins already during onboarding or soon after. Various templates exist and are in use, both from the Research Council of Norway and from the EU, but may be adjusted for use at the centres.

The experiences with career-development plans at the CoEs are so far limited. At the KUPP workshop, follow-up on career-development plans and sustained support over time were not discussed in any depth and few experiences were reported. These matters will be taken up at the next workshop.

We note, however, that RITMO has made progress in this regard, having established its own programme of career-support activities (courses, training, workshops) to help young researchers build and document skills and experiences. This programme has not only been useful for the young in helping ECRs set up and follow up career-development plans; it has also been useful for the centre itself by making it easier to structure and integrate career-support activities into the scheduled annual activities of the centre. Identifying focus areas and deciding how to address these in workshops and at centre retreats was an additional benefit of setting up the programme.

Other CoEs found this programme interesting and would like to learn from RITMO how to set up their own framework for career support, to help identify, schedule and assign tasks and activities more efficiently.

### Mentorship

Mentorship has become an important element of the career support at several CoEs. Some centres have established a mentorship programme (RITMO) or are offering mentorship (MultiLing), while others are in the process of introducing mentorship (NORMENT, Hylleraas, HTH). The mentorship models vary greatly in scope, organization, format, and degree of formalization.

The experiences from mentoring are positive and the CoEs agreed to work further on mentoring—in particular, to clarify how it may be strengthened while avoiding excessive administration. Among the questions singled out for further discussion are:

- How do we define the mentor's specific role within career support?
- How do we recruit mentors—what competences and experiences are needed?
- Where do we recruit mentors—from own staff, international network, or elsewhere?
- What should be the mentor's relationship to the mentee's supervisor?
- How are mentors and mentees best matched—by assignment or by own initiative?

While mentors so far have been recruited from the centres' own staff and own academic networks, it may be a good idea also to look elsewhere—not necessarily from academia—to ensure more independence and more diversity. The alumni network may here play a useful role. The idea was also put forward to set up an extended shared pool of mentors among the participating CoEs.

The participating CoEs agreed on the need for a «train the trainer» initiative, recognizing that our own experiences and knowledge about mentoring best practices are limited. It was agreed that mentorship should be an important focus area at the next KUPP workshop.

### **Young researcher arenas**

All CoEs have established arenas or forums (retreats, seminars, workshops, conferences) for presentations and discussions of ongoing research and recent developments, for education and training, and more widely to discuss research directions and policies. These are important arenas for the young, to which they contribute actively, at all centres.

At the 2018 KUPP workshops, RITMO's Roundtable created much interest among the participants. The Roundtable is the young researchers' own arena for seminars and thematic workshops, open to senior members only by invitation, if their expertise is needed or relevant to the agenda. Similar arenas have since been set up at CanCell (CanCell Young Scientists' Research Forum) and at the Hylleraas Centre (Hylleraas Young Researcher Parliament).

Such arenas give the young a broader mandate and a clearer voice at the centres. Indeed, one of the most clearly stated learning points from the first KUPP workshops was the need to involve the young directly in all centre activities, not just seminars and workshops. To strengthen the ownership to the centre and develop an appreciation for its ambitions and goals, the young may also be directly involved in the running or management of the centre. RITMO has introduced representation of young researchers (1 PhD and 1 postdoc) at the leadership meetings, while the Hylleraas Centre's Young Researcher Parliament has two representatives in the centre's Management Team.

The young researcher arenas established so far

- are open for all young researchers—for exchange of experience, discussions, and training
- organize professional and social events (workshops, seminars, invited talks, debates)
- help organize annual centre retreats, with an own agenda for the young
- have their own budget for professional and social activities
- are represented in the management or leadership of the centre
- provide input to career development work at the centre
- have access to the Strategic Advisory Committee/Board of the centre

These arenas have been very successful and are now and their introduction is now being considered also by other centres.

### **Visibility of young researchers**

The CoEs typically present their young researchers on their web pages, thereby making them more visible to the centre itself, to the university, to the broader academic world, and to stakeholders. Additionally, the centres promote and strengthened the visibility of young researchers by

- presenting new young researchers with an interview on the centre web pages (HTH)
- scheduling talks of young researchers immediately before invited guest speakers (CanCell)
- presenting their ongoing research in flash talks at meetings and workshops (CanCell)
- involving young researchers in dissemination activities (Multiling)
- including the young in meetings with external stakeholders (Ceed)
- sharing networks with the young researchers

### **Skills training**

Support of skills training and facilitation of training for young researchers have become increasingly important in academia. Mostly, this support is geared towards academic skills as needed for a successful outcome of ongoing research and to improve the academic qualifications of the young researchers.

Several participating CoEs have felt the need to strengthen support for training of academic skills. Reported actions (RITMO, MultiLing, HTH, CanCell) include internal workshops and courses and the funding or sponsoring of opportunities for building competences in

- communication (academic writing and presentation, popular dissemination, social media)
- research management and research leadership
- grant proposal writing and academic editing
- teaching and supervision
- data management

Initiatives taken to support the training of transferable skills for multiple career pathways also outside of academia will be discussed below as part of outgoing.

### **Funds for young researchers**

In some cases, special funds are made available to young researchers at the CoEs. At the Hylleraas Centre, for example, the Young Researcher Parliament has its own budget. Other centres have junior grants to enable pilot projects and new ideas to be explored by postdocs (CanCell) or a budget to promote mobility and skills training of postdocs (HTH).

### 3.3 Outgoing

In preparation for the next career step, career support should raise awareness of the different career paths open to young researchers, guide career planning, and facilitate the training of skills for multiple career paths inside and outside of academia.

Compared with the many actions and measures developed for onboarding and ongoing career support at the CoEs, those for outgoing have received less attention and are less developed. However, in the self-assessments at the 2019 workshop, the KUPP participants stated that outgoing support should be put high on the agenda for 2020, noting that outgoing support offers opportunities for cooperation among the centres. Although some initiatives have already been taken and some ideas have been put forward, the CoEs saw the need for a broader discussion of career support for outgoing.

As already noted, support for the outgoing phase must begin early. Ideally, actions and measures discussed here should be an integral part of career support during the whole employment period.

#### **Alumni networks and career tracking**

The KUPP participants recognize that alumni networks and the career tracking of their young researchers are important elements for career support for the outgoing phase. The establishment of an alumni network is useful since

- alumni have knowledge about the job market needed for good career support
- alumni can be useful mentors and inspirational role models for young researchers
- alumni can give valuable input and feedback on useful skills for training

Alumni networks have been set up at some CoEs (Rosseland, CEED, Hylleraas). At the next KUPP workshop, the experiences with these alumni networks and how they can be best used for career development support will be discussed.

#### **Transferable skills**

An important way of preparing ECRs for their future careers is to help them to raise their own awareness of generic and transferable skills<sup>6</sup> and to facilitate training opportunities and competence building. The young researchers acquire such skills partly through their own research work, with guidance and support from the academic environment, and partly through courses and workshops for competence building and facilitated training opportunities.

The research environment should concentrate on those generic skills that can be most adequately trained in practice as an integral part of science education, research, and dissemination. The CoEs recognized that not all such training opportunities have been taken advantage of and that they should

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<sup>6</sup> "Transferable skills are skills learned in one context that are useful in another (for example, future employment whether that is in research, business etc). They enable subject- and research-related skills to be applied and developed effectively. Transferable skills may be acquired through training or through work experience". (Report "Research Careers in Europe – Landscape and Horizons", European Science foundation 2009.)

be more openminded about training opportunities. In setting up their career-support programme (discussed above), RITMO has focused on the following skills:

- time management
- team and collaboration skills
- networking skills
- ethics at the workplace
- project management
- administration

Training in such skills have been offered as themed workshops and courses (RITMO, MultiLing), partly by offering courses from external providers or using programmes offered by the home institution. The participating CoEs believe that the university should offer a wider set of courses and services in transferable skills—by their very nature, courses in transferable skills can be offered centrally to all, regardless of academic specialisation, and should not be developed locally.

### **Involving the Scientific Advisory Committee**

For CoEs, with high expectations with respect to research outcome and a large proportion of young researchers among the staff, it is important that their Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) or Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) recognizes and appreciates the investments made in career support as an integral part of their mission and responsibility. Positive experiences from involving their SAB reported by CEED at the 2018 KUPP workshop inspired others to do the same. This has been a rewarding experience for all—the SAB members have been more than happy to contribute and have given valuable advice to the centres in 2019. Some SAB/SAC members have become involved as mentors for young researchers at the centres.

### **3.4 Status and further work**

In conclusion, the CoEs at the University of Oslo have taken on broad responsibilities for career support and are working systematically to improve their support. The KUPP collaboration has been both inspirational and effective for developing new targeted measures. The CoEs have also appreciated being put under pressure by sharing experiences and being observed by their fellow CoEs.

The status at the end of 2019 can be summarized as follows:

- The understanding of the ambition and measures for career development is well rooted and shared by the members of the centre leadership and dedicated senior members. To some extent, this is true also for senior staff in general and for the young researchers, but further work and more information are needed.<sup>7</sup>
- Onboarding was a priority for most centres in 2019; as a result, onboarding routines and activities are now well established.

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<sup>7</sup> In preparation for KUPP 2019, the CoEs were asked to answer the following question: To what extent are the ambition and measures for career development at the centre firmly rooted a) in the leadership? b) amongst the senior researchers? And c) amongst the young researchers?

- Some improvements have been made for career support in the ongoing phase—the CoEs have identified targeted measures and begun work on these for 2020.
- Apart from a few initiatives, outgoing career support is still underdeveloped but will be extensively discussed and worked on at the next KUPP workshop.

In the presentations of group work at the KUPP workshop in 2019, the following points were singled out for attention in 2020 and the next workshop:

- **Outgoing support:** discuss overall approach, develop new ideas, and report on experiences and measures under development
- **Transferable skills:** identify what skills can be trained in the research environment; discuss how to strengthen the portfolio of relevant training and courses
- **Mentorship:** clarify principles and the role of the mentor in career development, exchange experiences from implemented mentor programmes, identify good practices, consider a shared pool of suitable mentors and a shared train-the-trainer initiative
- **Career development plans:** refine templates and share experiences on efforts to improve career guidance

#### 4. Concluding comments

As pointed out in the introduction, universities in Norway and elsewhere are currently addressing their extended responsibilities to provide better support for researchers in early career stages, helping them to become better prepared and more attractive for career paths inside and outside academia. The CoEs at the University of Oslo, which depend critically on their ECRs to achieve their goals and visions, have all recognized the need to strengthen career support and are working together to achieve this goal.

The career support of the University of Oslo was reviewed and discussed in a working group set up by the Research Deans Forum in 2018. The working group's report was delivered in July 2019, detailing the ambitions, aims, standards, and allocation of roles and responsibilities within the university organization. Based on the report and the subsequent discussions and airing at the university, the new [Standards for UiO's Career Support to Early Career Researchers](#) were approved by the University Board on 10th March 2020.

The 2018 KUPP report provided an important input to the working group's report, testifying to the timeliness and usefulness of the KUPP collaboration. It is gratifying to see that the KUPP collaboration has so directly influenced the development of new career-support standards at the University of Oslo.

In this concluding section, we first highlight some general experiences from the work on career development within the framework of KUPP since 2018, experiences we believe are relevant learning lessons for the research environments, given their central role in the career-support system at the University as set out in the *Standards for UiO's Career Support to Early Career Researchers 2020*.

#### 4.1 Development of career support: investment and stimulus for a research environment

The development of good career support takes time. According to the model presented in Section 2, a mature organization (Level 5) with respect to career support is an organization where career support has become an integral part of its culture, along all five Dimensions A–E. None of the CoEs consider themselves as having reached Level 5. Indeed, the self-evaluation carried out in 2018 showed that most put themselves on Level 2 and at most Level 3, taking into account all dimensions. For some of the dimensions, the self-assessments varied from Level 1 to Level 4.

No self-evaluation was carried out in 2019. However, based on the homework for the KUPP 2019 workshop and the presentations and group work at workshop, none of the CoEs are now on Level 1 and some have risen to Level 3. Most CoEs find it challenging to rise to the next level.

Several lessons can be learned:

- Career-support development is a long-term commitment. It takes time to put new routines in place, to change old routines, and not least to establish a common understanding of tasks and roles. Indeed, aspiring CoEs should plan for active career support already in their proposals.
- Short-term measures must be prioritized and worked on systematically, step by step—implementation is demanding and it is inadvisable to take on too much at once.
- The development of good career support should be the collective responsibility of all centre staff rather than the individual responsibility of group leaders and a few committed senior researchers; it requires the constant attention of the leadership.
- The involvement of young researchers in all centre activities (including leadership) and the creation of own arenas will help create ownership and a sense of belonging to the centre.
- Collaboration among CoEs on career support is mutually beneficial for all, not just by facilitating the exchange of ideas but by adding motivation and positive peer pressure to succeed.
- To succeed with career development, the CoEs are dependent on good career-support services offered at other levels of the university organization.
- Improved career support benefits the centre as a whole by creating a better working environment, increasing the motivation of the young researches and strengthening their ownership to the centre and its vision, while at the same time increasing the attractiveness of the centre.

#### 4.2 Research environment's role in the total career support at the university

The distribution of responsibilities for career support services between organisational levels is an important element of the *Standards for UiO's Career Support*. According to these standards, the research environment has responsibility for

- providing onboarding and integration into the research environment
- creating a belongingness to the research environment
- providing professional training and facilitating skills training
- providing individual follow-up of professional development and career building

These responsibilities are in line with the KUPP participants' own assessments. KUPP identified in 2018 areas where contributions from other actors are strongly needed—in particular, competence building (course portfolios), establishing resource banks for tailor-made information and support services, and training of senior staff with central roles in career support. The Standards have to a certain extent taken these issues into consideration.

Regarding the relationship of the research environments to the different organizational levels at the university, we would like to emphasize the following:

According to the *Standards*, the **university departments** have responsibility for alumni activities and for contact with and knowledge about the job market in and outside of academia. We strongly welcome initiatives at the departmental level on this matter. The research environment has a responsibility to support understanding of career paths, contribute to an individual's career planning and to give advice on career prospects. To achieve this, the research environment needs close collaboration with all sections of their field through, for example, the involvement of alumni, external partners, broad networks and extensive outreach activities. Some CoEs have already given priority to these areas, while others are intending to do so. It will clearly be important for all academic environments to establish collaboration with their departments on this matter.

In the *Standards*, the **university faculties** are given the responsibility for setting up and running (separately or in collaboration) programmes to support the career building of PhD students and postdocs. We greatly welcome the fact that tailor-made postdoc-programmes be developed and made accessible to all our young researchers. Such programmes will be a valuable supplement to the career support and training in the research environment. It is important that the research environments and faculties collaborate, clarifying what these programmes should offer the participants in terms of career planning and competence building.

According to the *Standards*, **the institution** has the overall responsibility for career support to young researchers—in particular, the responsibility for maintaining infrastructure for career support information, for training of career support staff, and continued development of career support at the university. Good progress and better clarification of responsibilities in these areas are vital, given that all three points were identified by KUPP as important.

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**SFF KUPP – Career Development Pilot Programme  
(KUPP 2 at UiO November 2019)**

**PROGRAMME 2019**

**The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters 14th NOVEMBER 2019**

**Thursday 14. November 2019**

09.00 – 09.10	<b>Welcome and introduction to the day's programme</b>
09.10 – 09.30	<b>Review of KUPP 2018 in preparation for today's programme</b> Trygve Helgaker and Olaug Kristine Bringager
09:30 – 10:45	<b>Reports from CoEs on their career development work since 2018 (1)</b> What has been successful and not so successful?
10.45 – 11.00	Break
11.00 – 11:45	<b>Reports from CoEs on their career development work since 2018 (2)</b> What has been successful and not so successful?
11.45 – 12.00	<b>UiO's work on career support</b> Status report by Olaug Kristine Bringager
12.00 – 13.00	Lunch
13:00 – 14:00	<b>Career planning for young researchers</b> — experiences and new ideas Includes group work
14:00 – 15:00	<b>Mentoring of young researchers</b> — experiences and new ideas. Includes group work
15:00 – 16:00	<b>Arenas for young researchers</b> — experiences and new ideas. Includes group work
16:00 – 16:30	Break
16:30 – 17:30	<b>Discussion within each CoE</b> What have we learned from others? How can we take it forward?
17.30 – 18.00	<b>Future collaboration of CoEs on career development</b> Suitable areas for fruitful cooperation
18.00	<b>Tapas dinner and mingling</b>