

Mater Research – Career Track Fellows

Outline

Mater Research recognises that for full-time health researchers the period between postdoctoral research and establishment of research independence is often challenging. Premature transition to independence can lead to problems associated with inadequate resources and investigators can struggle with the challenges of recruiting and managing a research team. Newly formed smaller teams are vulnerable to the vagaries of grant funding, can struggle with productivity and can generally be unstable economically. Consequently, it is important to provide high potential emerging investigators with a pathway to progressively build independence in a supportive environment that provides a high level of mentoring and exposure to research leadership mechanisms and research group management responsibilities.

Mater Research is committed to developing the career prospects of emerging researchers whether ultimately they remain at Mater or move on to establish full independence in another organisation. A strong foundation toward establishing independence is the development of both an internal and external profile as an individual researcher and building a network of supportive researcher leaders. To address this, we have created the position of Career Track Fellow within Mater Research. Appointment as a Career Track Fellow recognises that the individual has high potential as a successful research academic and has made substantive progress toward research independence. The appointment will aid in preparing the fellow to more effectively navigate the postdoc to group leader transition pathway through attaining leadership and management skills required to lead a research team.

Conditions for Career Track Fellow Appointments

- Career Track Fellows will normally have attained external Fellowship-style support for their position. The Career Track Fellow classification does not provide salary support for the Fellow and has no associated additional research funding. Appointment to Career Track Fellow is not a formal promotion in terms of Academic Level or salary.
- Career Track Fellows will initially remain embedded in their current research group and will not have a separate budget for research. The Group Leader must fully support the appointment, agree to sponsor the ongoing development of the Career Track Fellow, and will have overarching financial responsibility for budgets. It is expected that the Group Leader will mentor the Career Track Fellow in increasing their financial stewardship knowledge and skills. Financial responsibility for grants won by the Career Track Fellow as CIA can be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.
- Career Track Fellows will be managed and mentored by both their Group Leader and the Directors of Research (Biomedical & Clinical, whichever is relevant) who will jointly conduct their annual performance development, and give continuing guidance on the path to independence.
- Career Track Fellows will receive recognition on their own webpage linked from their Group webpage, and will control the content of that webpage.
- Subject to UQ higher degree research (HDR) advisor course completion, Career Track Fellows would be expected to be the principal advisor of undergraduate and HDR research students working on the project(s) that have been agreed to as the primary responsibility of the Career

Track Fellow. Appointment of students must have the approval of the Group Leader who would typically also be on the advisory team.

- Career Track Fellows will be engaged in leadership meetings and activities involving the Group Leaders including the monthly discussion forums and professional training activities. Career Track Fellows will be engaged in some committee/administrative work to increase research leadership service.
- It is expected that Career Track Fellows will progressively assume Principal Investigator status on external grant applications as they build their own portfolio of funding. Grant applications should be discussed with the Group Leader, who may or may not be a co-investigator, and should be reviewed by the Group Leader prior to submission.
- The appointment as Career Track Fellow will be for two years in the first instance. Continuation thereafter will be determined by the Executive Director after review of annual performance development documents and consultation with the Directors of Research and the Group Leader. The Executive Director has the right to rescind the appointment of Career Track Fellow at any time should the Fellow not continue to operate at a high level of performance and within the Conditions above.
- When a point of substantive external funding and appropriate personal development is reached the Career Track Fellow can apply to the Executive Director of Mater Research to establish their own fully independent research group. However, appointment at Group Leader level at Mater Research is not guaranteed and will be influenced by Organisational Strategy and budget limitations. Mater Research leadership will proactively support Career Track Fellow attainment of an independent group leader position within external institutions.

Application Process

- A call for applications to be recognised as a Career Track Fellow will occur at least once every second year.
- Candidates should declare their intention to apply to their direct manager when the Career Track Fellow process opens.
- Candidates should have had a Performance Review with their Supervisor prior to applying.
- Candidates will submit a written application addressing each criterion and updated Curriculum Vitae.
- Candidates will then be interviewed by a committee consisting of Director of Biomedical/Clinical Research (Chair) four senior researchers and Human Resources Manager (Committee Coordinator).
- Candidate's supervisor will also be interviewed.
- The final decision on appointment rests with the Executive Director after advice from the committee.
- Individuals recruited to Mater Research may be appointed directly to the position of Career Track Fellow, at the discretion of the Executive Director and advice of the Directors of Biomedical/Clinical Research/Selection Committee. The conditions of these appointments with respect to Group Leader approval, mentoring etc will be identical to those Fellows promoted internally.
- Successful candidates will be recognised with the title Career Track Fellow.

Criterion for Evaluation

- A clear goal to become an independent researcher within the next 3-5 years with a detailed research vision and stepwise plan to achieve this goal (up to 1 page)
- A detailed plan for the area of the research that the applicant will lead that is agreed and signed off by both the Group Leader and the Career Track Fellow (up to 2 pages)
- Demonstrated acumen in managing research staff and students
- CV providing evidence of
 - a record of high and sustained research performance relative to opportunity
 - involvement as an investigator on current externally funded grants, preferably with evidence of at least attempts to gain principal investigator funding