
COACHING EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS

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AGENDA

- Background
- Early Career Researcher (ECR) booklet
- Who are ECRs?
- Characteristics of ECRs?
- Why do they need your coaching?
- How you can coach them effectively- the Challenges?

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BACKGROUND

1. **Ongoing program** by Elsevier and Research Management Services International to provide **academic and professional advice** to everyone in universities who have a **role in carrying out, guiding, formulating, focusing, funding or facilitating research**
2. **Webinar** <http://info.spotlight.scival.com/webcast/>
3. **Discussion continuing** at the end, national research managers and administrators annual meetings, etc.
- 4.

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BACKGROUND

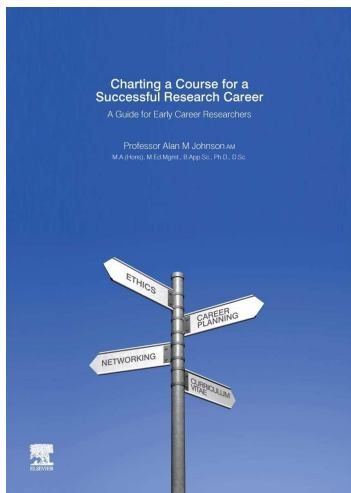
4. **Talk is global**, covering ECR in **different research disciplines, countries, cultures and universities**
5. **Research and research training focused**
6. **How you can coach ECRs**, not what things they need to do (which are described in my ECR Guide)

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ECR GUIDE



Available **at no cost** from

Research Management
Services International
www.rmsinternational.com.au

Elsevier SciVal
www.scival.com/ECR

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WHO ARE ECRs?

- Usually **no more than 5 years since award of PhD** or **may be about to submit** their PhD
- Usually a **young researcher** “working their way up,” but...
- **May be an older high profile professional** who moves in to a university later in life e.g. nursing, law, business, but could also be STEM (Hospital Scientist, Engineer, Physician, etc.) – under extra pressure to perform
- They are **at the beginning of their career in university research**

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CHARACTERISTICS OF ECRs

1. **Not in the “official” structure** of the University
2. **Receptive to new ideas**, idealistic, **www savvy**, **ambitious, very competitive** - may have to compete with other ECR in the team for first place on publications or for permanent positions
3. More likely to speak English, so **familiar with international literature and research findings** and able to **apply for international grants and Fellowships**
4. PhD passport to international travel for Fellowships
- 5.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF ECRs

5. **Should be focused on their own research program** within their employment, **but...**
6. Often “worker bees in the hive” –
 - **write the research grants** of the senior research supervisor
 - **Often “ghost supervise” PhD students**

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WHY DO THEY NEED YOUR COACHING?

1. ECRs are the **future of your university research base, but...**
2. Their **positions are usually not permanent** and are of **short duration**
3. **May not be well paid**, some European systems have **half time appointments**
4. **Often encouraged to teach undergraduates** as well, putting stress on their research output

5.

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WHY DO THEY NEED YOUR COACHING?

5. **Competitive government research funding** is at best not increasing and at worst **declining in most countries**, and this is most **likely to affect ECR more** than experienced, senior researchers

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WHY DO THEY NEED YOUR COACHING?

6. Some research supervisors support them well, but often they are not well supervised

- » High profile good senior research supervisors often too busy to worry about them – “Sink or Swim”, “Publish or Perish”
- » Less knowledgeable senior research supervisors may give advice that is not well grounded and/or is not in the interests of the ECR

7. Universities often focus their efforts on the few “high flyer” senior researchers

8.

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WHY DO THEY NEED YOUR COACHING?

8. Numbers of key academic research personnel

1	Deputy Vice-Chancellor / Vice-President/Rector (Research)	1
2	Dean (average 5 Faculties / University)	5
3	Dean, Graduate School	1
4	Assoc Deans (Research)	5
5	Head of Department or School (average 5 / Faculty)	25
6	Senior Research Supervisor (average 5 / Department or School)	125
7	ECR (average 1-3 / Senior Researcher)	125 – 375

How many ECRs does your university have??

9.

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WHY DO THEY NEED YOUR COACHING?

9. Very **rewarding part of your job helping people realize their full potential** and it **supports your university's strategic research plan**
10. It is also a **legal requirement** for NSF grants and it is becoming more important for NIH and ARC grant success

MAJOR NATIONAL INITIATIVES

USA – National Science Foundation (NSF)

- Under the recent US Congress H.R. 2272 “*21st Century Competitiveness Act – 2007*” (“America Competes Act”) Sec. 7008 – **Investigators who receive NSF funding need to describe in their applications how they will mentor postdocs** employed by their grants

MAJOR NATIONAL INITIATIVES

USA – National Institutes of Health (NIH)

- August 2009, NIH announced a new policy (*NOT-OD-09-021*), **designed to encourage early transition to research independence.**
- **New Investigators** (within 10 years of their terminal research degree or medical residency) will be designated as **Early Stage Investigators (ESIs)**.
- **RO1s from ESIs will be identified and the career stage of the applicant will be considered** at the time of review and award

MAJOR NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Australia - Australian Research Council (ARC)

ARC has **recently changed the major selection criterion** for their grant funding programs from

“**Track record relative to opportunities**”

to

“**Research opportunity and performance evidence**”

in an apparent attempt to focus more on the outputs of ECRs

HOW YOU CAN COACH THEM

The hierarchical challenge for you –
Managing the essential relationships

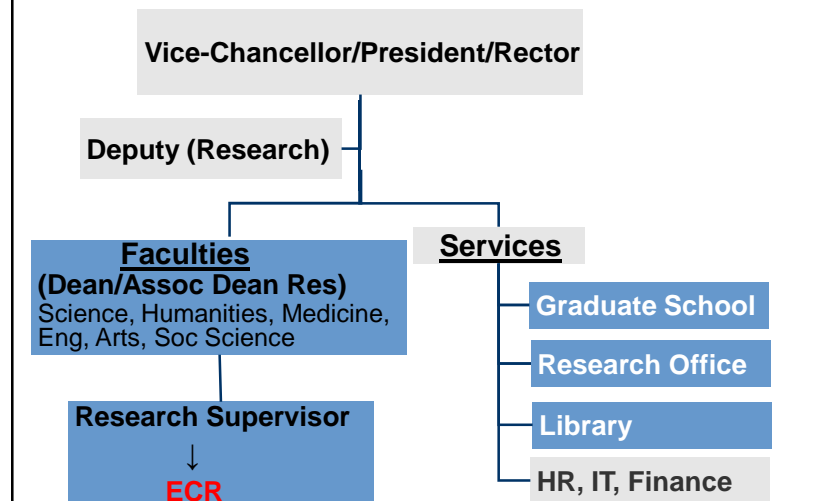
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor/President /Rector (Research)
- Dean of Faculty / Graduate School
- Assoc Dean (Research) and (Teaching)
- Head of Department / School
- Senior Research Supervisor
- **ECR**
- Director of Research Services / Graduate School
- Librarian/Head of Finance

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UNIVERSITY STRUCTURE



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HOW YOU CAN COACH THEM – THE CHALLENGES

- **Relationship with senior academic managers**
- Relationship with ECRs
 1. **Do not often get together** – May attend research discipline specific conferences, so good, two-way central communication (a university “Research Net”) is essential
 2. Ideally **one good central communication point – You**
 - 3.

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HOW YOU CAN COACH THEM – THE CHALLENGES

3. **Grant deadline announcements**, Fellowship Awards, details of forthcoming **prizes**, honours etc.
4. Announcements concerning **internal research updates** – New facilities, policy changes
5. **Acknowledge “winners”** of successful grants, prizes, awards
6. Sharing information e.g. the ECR booklet
- 7.

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HOW YOU CAN COACH THEM – THE CHALLENGES

7. Research culture differences

- Arts and Humanities compared with STEM
- Cross-disciplinary projects

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HOW YOU CAN COACH THEM – THE CHALLENGES

8. Bringing them together – **Physically and virtually**

- Prizes for PhD and junior faculty research
- PhD scholarships for junior faculty to supervise
- Postdoctoral Fellowships, internal and external
- **Informal social functions**
- **ECR workshops**
- Resources required

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HOW YOU CAN COACH THEM – THE CHALLENGES

ECR workshops

- Mentoring and supervisory relationship
- Networking and research collaboration
- Planning and managing research projects
- Ethics
- Publication strategies and monitoring
- Journal article writing 2.-

HOW YOU CAN COACH THEM – THE CHALLENGES

ECR workshops

- Conference attendance
- Industry collaboration
- Research careers and academic advancement
- Strategic planning
- Appropriately selling your accomplishments

HOW YOU CAN COACH THEM – THE CHALLENGES

Resources required

- **Internal university recognition** of the **importance of ECR**
- **Research and research training policies** **reflect the importance of ECRs**
- **Budget** to facilitate coaching
- **Staff**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Library / database facilities**