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EDUC Young Researchers programme Guidelines

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Abstract	The EYRP Guidelines define the framework and aim of Task 5.3, which is to recruit 2 cohorts of post-doctoral researchers in the EDUC Universities in 2024 and 2025 that will pursue their research in cooperation with the Alliance partners including international mobility periods and shared training. The guidelines specify the characteristics of the programme, common application requirements and selection procedures, describe the mentorship programme and the personal career development plan (PCDP). The document includes 3 annexes (PCDP template, Responsibilities of post-docs and Supervisors, Mentor- Mentee matching document).
Keywords	Post-doctoral fellows; international mobility; research cooperation, career development, training

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1. Characteristics of the programme

The EDUC young researchers programme (EYRP) is an international postdoctoral fellowship programme aiming at attracting talented scientists to develop their two-year project in the Universities of the EDUC Alliance in line with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (C&C).

The purpose of a postdoctoral position is four-fold:

1. To develop creativity and independence as a scientific researcher
2. To obtain new skills and develop new methodologies
3. To provide networking opportunities with other researchers within and outside the field
4. To receive career development training for future career goals.

The aim of the programme is to recruit 2 cohorts of post-doctoral researchers in the years 2024 and 2025 (3 post-docs per cohort) that will pursue their research on the topics on which cooperations already exist or will emerge before the call.

Projects with intersectoral or multidisciplinary dimensions are strongly encouraged.

During the programme, international mobilities are expected of at least 3 months and they will be implemented in another Alliance university.

2. Programme and grants

Postdocs are at a unique stage in their careers. The postdoc phase serves to develop a scientific profile and to acquire additional qualifications, aiming at the ability to conduct independent research. A postdoc is engaged in activities that will foster his or her professional development.

The grant position is preparatory for a full-time academic and/or research career outside the academia.

Key points of the programme are the following:

- Financial support: the EYRP covers a 24 months grant
- Supervision arrangements: agreement on responsibilities of both parties, regular meetings between the fellow and the supervisor/s to assess progress in the research and to ensure that goals are being achieved (Annex 1)
- Mentoring programme: regular meeting with a mentor in order to assist the fellow with career and personal development
- Personal Career Development Plan (PCDP): each postdoc will have to draft his/her personal career development plan, to be updated at the beginning of the second year, according to the template in Annex 2
- Team integration, Ethics & Integrity
- Commitment to dissemination, exploitation & communication, with particular attention to the principles of Open Science and to public engagement

- Training scheme: every fellow has to participate to a set of training activities offered within the EDUC Alliance (developed within Tasks 3.4 and 5.5) and at each partner universities (on transferrable/soft skills besides high-level scientific courses)
- International Mobility: a minimum three-month mobility period (even if not consecutive) is mandatory for each fellow. The fellow will be hosted in at least another EDUC Alliance University under the co-supervision of a researcher of the EDUC hosting university
- Assistance: dedicated staff will provide personalized assistance, also through the Euraxess service or other dedicated offices depending on local conditions, to the fellow, particularly in the case of extra-EU candidates, to prepare his/her stay, such as entry, residence and work procedures, health coverage, bank accounts, social security, family benefits, taxes and other support to facilitate his/her integration.

3. Applying for and appointing postdoctoral fellows

The recruitment process includes advertising of postdoc grant positions through the Euraxess portal, the EDUC website and the partner Universities websites and calls.

The following points will be clarified in the call, in accordance with national regulations:

- a) Entry requirements: priority will be given to candidates who have completed their PhD not more than 3 years prior to the call deadline (excluding sickness and parental leave)
- b) Duration of the postdoc grant: 2 years
- c) Topics and partners: research topics will be identified mainly according to the EDUC strategic areas and existing cooperations¹ within the EDUC partners that will be also specified in the call
- d) Project proposal: the project proposal should be in line with one of the proposed topics and should describe: background, methodology, expected results and outcomes
- e) Qualifications that the postdoc should acquire. This may include: developing a scientific profile, acquiring technical skills, gaining teaching experience (postdocs can be involved in the supervision of bachelor and master students, doctoral students and/or technical assistants), active participation in conferences (e.g. presentations, conducting seminars, organization of sessions), offering scientific courses or know-how transfer, and other measures designed to help establish networks and to benefit from the reciprocal exchange of information
- f) Training for postdocs to acquire professional/research skills, soft skills, etc.
- g) Mobility period: international mobility in another university within the EDUC Alliance
- h) Possible cross-sectoral mobilities in cooperation with the local ecosystem
- i) Grants: supported with funds from the EDUC Alliance, from the Universities and from other forms of funding. The grant amount will be defined according to the internal rules of the recruiting university. The number of grants may increase in the event of further public and/or private funding.

¹ Topics: Life Long Health and Wellbeing; Culture and heritage; Justice, inequality and inclusion; Mobility / Smart cities; European Union Studies; Sustainable Changes: climate and resources; Cyber Security and Artificial Intelligence; Economics and Business; Material Science; Biochemistry & Molecular Biology

4. Application Requirements

To participate in the selection, candidates should apply through the procedure available at each university.

Interested applicants must fill in the application form with all the required elements and attach all the documents in PDF files.

The application should be written in English and all the sections proposed in the application form need to be completed.

The application procedure will consist of:

- a research project to be written using the available form
- a scientific and professional CV, in order to assess the suitability of the applicant research activity to the projects they are applying for
- a proof of identity
- supporting documents regarding the Recognized Researcher Status (i.e. PhD Diploma)
- if owned, certificate/s of knowledge of the foreign language required (English - Level B2 QCER) issued by a certification authority, a private language school or a university's one, and other language certificates. During the interview, the Committee will assess the knowledge of the foreign language for the applicants who do not submit any language certification
- the publications to be evaluated, eventually including the PhD thesis.

Candidates will confirm to have read and agreed art. 13 of GDPR (EU Regulation no. 2016/679), about the processing of personal data, as well as on the free circulation of data, and will give the consent to communicate and disseminate his/her own personal data for the purposes of the postdoc call.

5. Selection committee

The Selection Committee is composed of the scientific manager of the project or a researcher from the same research area and at least two qualified researchers even belonging to other universities from the same research area, taking into account the gender balance. One of the members of the committee should belong to the EDUC Partner/s University/ies identified for the specific topic. Absence of conflicts of interest will be checked to ensure a fair selection process.

The selection will take place on the basis of the qualifications, the research project proposed and an interview, through internationally recognized standards.

The Selection Committee can work also by electronic means.

Scores will be given following the criteria previously defined in each call.

The assessable qualifications will include the master's degree final grade, coherence of the Ph.D. with the topic proposed, the scientific publications (mainly if coherent with the topic), and other relevant certificates (e.g. language certificates, post-graduate courses, participation in conferences, etc.).

The project proposal will be evaluated according to four main criteria:

1. Scientific Excellence of the project: methodology and quality of the research project
2. Innovation: innovative contribution related to the research topic background

3. Potential outcomes of the project: potential contribution to research within the EDUC Universities, added value of the project in the local context and quality of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate research results
4. Feasibility of the project: coherence and effectiveness of the work plan, timeline and risk management.

During the interview, the Committee will have to assess the suitability of the applicants to carry out the research projects they are applying for, through the detailed assessment of their scientific-professional curriculum. It would be also evaluated the complementary transversal skills and the applicants' capability of integration into the local and international environment.

The recommended score sharing is: 35 points for qualifications, 30 for the project proposal, 35 for the interview (maximum 100 points).

6. Mentorship

In addition to his/her supervisor, all the fellows will be supported by a mentor. The mentor can be a professor from the Academia or a high skilled worker from the private sector. The mentorship programme would help fellows to network with early career peers, prepare them to advance their research, expose them to the research community and funding contexts, acquaint them with different work contexts and career tracks.

It is equally important during this career stage to clearly communicate expectations regarding research performance, to support the postdocs in reaching their personal goals for further qualification, and to provide regular career advice. Such advice should also include counselling on the diverse spectrum of job opportunities outside the realm of academic research.

The aim of the mentorship programme is to:

- strengthen mentee' self-confidence
- share knowledge and experience
- facilitate integration of the mentees within the EDUC Alliance Universities and the local ecosystem.

During the two years of the fellowship, the mentoring programme will help postdoctoral fellows to pursue their goals. Postdoctoral fellows and their mentors must identify appropriate professional growth and career advancement goals and meet regularly (at least a meeting every 4 or 6 months). Discussion between mentor and mentee is strictly confidential.

The interaction is part of the professional guidance, but without hierarchical link between mentor and mentee.

Mentor and mentee will be matched according to the mentees' needs and the mentors' areas of experience through a dedicated questionnaire (Annex 3).

A short training seminar may be offered to mentors before the beginning of the mentoring to help them foster a fruitful interaction with the mentee, based on confidentiality, respect, comprehension and openness. Each University will identify a list of mentors with specific skills and appropriate experience to support the programme (e.g. Career planning and development, Knowledge of research institutions in Europe, Innovation and entrepreneurship, etc.).

The programme would benefit mentees helping them to clarifying career ambitions and opportunities and to building network. Mentors would benefit as well since they will have the opportunity to build relationship and networking with a new generation of researchers, to meet other mentors, to gain new insight into the dynamics and learning opportunities of mentoring. Part of the mentorship program should be to encourage initiatives by postdocs to organize themselves at the institutional level (e.g. through postdoc associations, postdoc programs, postdoc representatives) and, if possible, supported logistically and financially.

7. Personal Career Development Plan

Each fellow will be supported by the mentor in writing a Career development plan at the very beginning of his/her postdoc contract that would help him/her to explore career possibilities and set goals related to his/her career. The purpose of such planning is to ensure that the work is clearly focused on achieving research and professional goals (Annex 2).

The career development plan aims to:

- Better recognise strengths and identify areas for improvement
- Fully realise and maximise fellows' potential as researcher and as highly skilled worker in jobs outside the academia
- Be more proactive in seeking and making most use of the development opportunities that are available within and outside the Organisation
- Improve fellows' competences and ability to work effectively in the current role and preparing for future positions, within or beyond the University
- Successfully pursue fellows' career aspirations either in academia or beyond.

The supervisors may be involved in the process of drafting the career development plan together with the fellow and the mentor. The process involves considering self assessment (personality, skills, strengths and weaknesses), exploration of options, careers and organisations, focusing on the development of skills based on preferred career target and the action plan on job search.

Input and recommendation from the former PhD supervisor can be acquired to get an overview of the post-doc strength/weaknesses.

The plan can be altered as skills develop, interests change, and career objectives are reconsidered. The PCDP will be shared with the supervisors/co-supervisors and the heads of the relevant Departments, who will monitor, together with the mentor, the progress of the post-doc towards the achievements planned.

Annex 1 - Distribution of responsibilities between EDUC Fellow and Supervisors

Responsibilities of the supervisor

Responsibilities of the postdoctoral fellow

RESEARCH & TRAINING

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that mutually understood expectations and goals are established. • Maintain an atmosphere in which the Fellow feels free to approach the supervisor for advice or discussion. • Respect the fellow's working style, career goals and rate of progress. • Be aware of EDUC Postdoc's obligations in terms of secondment and training and provide support for their good implementation. • Participate in the events with the Fellow. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assume primary responsibility for shaping, developing, and managing the research project. • Conduct the project to a high standard. • Play an active role in seeking scientific and professional advice, both from the supervisor and other HI members. • Strike a balance between opportunities to develop a project reflecting his/her own interests and feasibility. • Take advantage of the opportunities offered in terms of mobility and training. |
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CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet regularly to establish and foster a Career Development Plan. • Provide support so that professional and transferable skills form a fundamental part of training. • Advise fellow on possible job opportunities at the end of the postdoctoral period. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assume primary responsibility for shaping, developing, managing, and directing their career. • Maximise the opportunity to work in a non-academic environment by seeking to understand the role of research outside the organisation in a wider environment. |
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TEAM INTEGRATION

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate the Fellow within the team. • Encourage the Fellow to seek advice and collaborative opportunities from other members and from mentors. • Support the fellow's use of the full benefits of his/her employment, including holiday periods. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in a collegial and cooperative way with the supervisor and other co-workers. • Participate actively in shared activities. • Be aware of being part of an institution. • Work responsibly and autonomously with the decentralised offices. |
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ETHICS & INTEGRITY

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote ethical standards for driving research, including compliance with national and European regulations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in compliance with institutional, national and European ethical standards for conducting research. |
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DISSEMINATION, EXPLOITATION & COMMUNICATION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the Fellow to consider the broad context of his/her research, be sensitive to the importance of engaging the public with research. • Support the Fellow to present his/her work at international conferences and publish in high profile journals. • Afford full recognition of the fellow's contributions to research, including appropriate authorship of publications. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present his/her work in a scientifically sound manner both to specialists and non-specialists and engage him/herself in dissemination and outreach activities. • Promote EDUC by sharing his/her testimonial and encouraging other researchers to apply. |
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Name of fellow:

Host Institution:

Name of Supervisor:

Date & Signature of fellow:

Date & Signature of supervisor

Annex 2 – Personal Career Development Plan

The Personal Career Development Plan (PCDP) provides a planning process that identifies annual progress, professional development needs, and career objectives for postdoctoral fellows. It serves as a communication tool between postdoctoral fellows and their mentor/supervisors and offers a platform for broader discussion. Identifying short-term goals will give postdoctoral fellows a clearer sense of expectations and help identify milestones along the way to achieving specific objectives. Postdoctoral fellows will have a process that assists in developing and achieving long-term career goals.

Goals of the PCDP help the postdoctoral fellow identify:

- Short-term needs for improving current performance.
- Long-term career goals and options and the necessary tools to achieve them.

Outline of the CDP process

The development, implementation, and revision of the PCDP requires a series of steps to be conducted by the postdoctoral fellow and the mentor. Both the postdoctoral fellow and the mentor must participate fully in the process. Best results are to be expected in a context of honesty and openness. In such a case, the PCDP will likely function as a starter for broader discussion on the involvement and future career and goals of the postdoc. Proper use may also reveal or prevent misconceptions about tasks, involvement in research group activities and objectives.

Duration and Revision

It is up to the postdoc and mentor to use the PCDP as felt appropriate. To this end, they may adjust the plan according to personal needs and/or particularities of the research field and career expectations. At each iteration, the postdoctoral fellow completes the PCDP and submits at the given time, following discussion and revision with the mentor.

The PCDP will be shared with the supervisors/co-supervisors and the heads of the relevant Departments, who will monitor, together with the mentor, the progress of the post-doc towards the achievements planned.

Suggested steps

During the first meeting it is important to discuss and agree about the competences listed below and the starting knowledge of them. Mentor and mentee will check each area and establish which competences the fellow would like to improve and how to achieve the improvement. During the following meetings mentor and mentee will discuss about the progresses made and the competences to strengthen while clarifying fellow's aims and objectives. In the last meeting, mentor and mentee will check which competences have been improved and how these competences would lead to new career steps.

Postdoc Fellow: Name

Mentor: Name

Self-assessment

For the Postdoc fellow: start by thinking through your existing strengths and development areas. What are you really good at? Where could you improve? This will help you figure out what to target.

Likes & Motivators

Dislikes

Strenghts

Thinking about your own views and feedback you have received, what skills do you excel at?

Development areas

What do you find challenging? What areas would you like to improve on?

Where do you want to be in 2 years' time?

Where do you want to be in 5 years' time?

Competence Achievement

Competences that the Fellow would like to build up and/or improve during his/her postdoc grant, according to the **European Competence Framework for Researchers²**, as listed below (starting level and progress towards the target level):

- **Doing research**

	Levels of Achievement			
Competences	Foundational	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Have disciplinary expertise				
Perform scientific research				
Conduct interdisciplinary research				
Write research documents				
Apply research ethics and integrity principles				

- **Managing research tools**

	Levels of Achievement			
Competences	Foundational	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Manage research data				
Promote citizen science				
Work in teams				
Manage intellectual property rights				
Operate open-source software				

- **Managing Research**

	Levels of Achievement			
Competences	Foundational	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Mobilise Resources				
Manage Projects				
Negotiate				
Evaluate Research				
Promote Open Access Publications				

² https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-04/ec_rtd_research-competence-presentation.pdf

- Making an impact

	Levels of Achievement			
Competences	Foundational	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Participate in the publication process				
Disseminate results to the research community				
Teach in academic or vocational contexts				
Communicate to the broad public				
Increase the impact of Science on Policy and Society				
Promote open innovation				
Promote the transfer of knowledge				

- Self Management

	Levels of Achievement			
Competences	Foundational	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Manage personal professional development				
Show entrepreneurial spirit				
Plan self-organisation				
Cope with pressure				

- Cognitive Abilities

	Levels of Achievement			
Competences	Foundational	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Abstract thinking				
Critical thinking				
Analytical thinking				
Strategic thinking				
Systemic thinking				
Problem solving				
Creativity				

- Work with others

	Levels of Achievement			
Competences	Foundational	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Interact professionally				
Develop networks				
Work in teams				
Ensure wellbeing at work				
Build mentor-mentee relationships				
Promote inclusion & diversity				

Actions

What actions to be taken in the next year to play to get ready for the 2-year goal?

Some examples of actions according to different competencies:

- Learn new techniques
- Publish work from ongoing collaborations
- Chair a session at an international meeting
- Mentor graduate and undergraduate students
- Collaborate with other researchers in the department
- Help select and purchase long-term resources
- Write a small grant to complement ongoing work / Participate in securing research funding
- Publish results generated from the grant
- Communicate research findings: publish data in peer-reviewed journals, give oral presentations or posters at conferences, write about research for non-scientific audiences via blogs or online magazines
- Be involved in public engagement activities
- Looking for a job opportunity

Annex 3 - Mentorship Programme Template

GUIDELINES

The mentorship programme would help the post-doc (mentee) during his/her career, while also giving new opportunities to the mentor.

In order to find the best suitable solution, every mentee is asked to fill in this form.

Professors or experts working in the private sector willing to be mentors should fill in this questionnaire as well.

The questionnaire should be completed in English and submitted along with the mandatory supporting documents. All sections of the form should be completed.

For any question, please contact@.....

Compiling as:

☐ Mentor

☐ Mentee

Personal Information

Name	
Gender	
Institution	
Location	
E-mail	
Research Area	
Language(s) in which you feel confident to exchange	

Interest Identification

This section aims to identify the mentees' needs and the areas the mentors would like to share their experience. This will enable the EDUC team to make the most appropriate matches.

Please specify your interest for each item (add an "X" choosing one column per row).

Interests	Low	Medium	High
Self-confidence improvement			
Leadership improvement			
Work/Personal life balance			
Intercultural competences			
Time management			
Networking, communication, visibility			
Work and project management			
Career planning and development			
Innovation and entrepreneurship			
Others: _____			

Actions

Intersectoral & multidisciplinary dimensions

Please specify your interest in intersectoral or multidisciplinary dimensions:

Mobility & training (only for mentee)

Please specify your preferences in mobility and training periods:

Commitment

Please specify how often you would like to meet with the mentor/mentee:

Other relevant information

Do you wish to share any other information that might be helpful in finding a match?

Expectations

What do you expect from the mentoring programme?