

POST-ACADEMIC CAREERS CASE STUDIES

POLICY

REGIONAL SKILLS PLANNING LEAD

Since completing your education what jobs have you had?

Started out at a Pharma company called Organon in Scotland, as a Team Leader of drug discovery projects for treatment of CNS, analgesia and anaesthesia indications. In a matrix environment, led an international multidisciplinary and multicultural team to solve multiple scientific challenges leading to the identification of preclinical candidates through to proof of concept. This included being part of the team that discovered Sugammadex (Bridion®).

After a series of acquisitions by Schering-plough and Merck the company exited Scotland and I was made redundant.

Then took a new role with Redx Pharma as Head of Chemistry which led to becoming the Director of Scientific Strategy responsible for managing scientific activities across Redx subsidiaries, as well as helping to develop scientific strategy in each therapeutic area. The role involved providing specialist in-house scientific support for Business Development and overseeing scientific research across the Redx Pharma group.

Redx meant living away from home. So to get back to my family and with horizons opened working with an SME I decided to change career and move into economic development with Skills Development Scotland as the Life Sciences sector manager. Here I was responsible for the development and

delivery of the Life and Chemical Sciences Skills Investment Plans that will sustain and support the growth of Scotland's Life and Chemical Science sectors.

What does your current job entail?

Regional Skills Planning Lead covering Forth Valley, Stirling, Clackmannanshire, Fife, Perth & Kinross, Angus and Dundee. A strategic role within Skills Development Scotland (SDS), working closely with partners across Central Scotland to align the delivery of Scotland's Enterprise and Skills agencies and drive the implementation of the SDS Strategic plan. Work closely with partners at a senior level across industry bodies, academia, Local authorities and public agencies to ensure that the skills system is aligned with and informed by employer demand for skills. I also act as the lead SDS representative for the City / Growth Deal Partnerships within the central regions.

What is the best part of your current role?

Being able to influence the skills agenda on a national level by working with partners and stakeholders. Providing them with the evidence base in which they can fill gaps in curriculum to tackle key areas such as climate change.



Ronnie Palin

[@palinronnie](https://www.linkedin.com/in/ronaldpalin)

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

- 1 Resilience
- 2 Communication
- 3 Ability to work with partners/stakeholders on all levels

Ronnie's Advice

You develop a lot of different skills (not just qualifications) in your academic journey that can be applied to many different careers not just in science. Its these 'softer' skills that are often overlooked but are vital in many roles. I personally followed a traditional route to be a medicinal chemist, but the knowledge gained in working with an SME opened my eyes to the wider world of work and job opportunities. My advice is don't be blinkered by your qualification and look at job descriptions out with your discipline, don't pigeonhole yourself. You would be surprised how you meet the criteria if you really think.

PhD Studied

Organic Chemistry
University of Strathclyde

Current Job

Regional Skills Planning Lead (Central)
Skills Development Scotland

CHAIR & BOARD MEMBER

Since completing your PhD what jobs have you had?

I have always been in the field of health and life sciences but have followed a very varied path which has given wide experience & opportunity to draw on. I started in pharmaceutical sales, training, marketing, management then moved into health economics & market access, then medical technology and ultimately strategy, policy & consultancy. I have seen industry from all perspectives – ranging from taking a start up to an exit to supporting multinationals through BREXIT and Covid.

What does your current job entail?

Currently I have a portfolio of roles which allows me to support Scotland in strengthening its life science cluster through The Life Sciences ILG, SHIP and many committees. I also am privileged to serve as head of ABHI Scotland and look after some of our key sectors pensions as independent board member. Principally I work within the triple helix of industry, academia & health to support the life sciences sector and the Scottish Government's ambitions for it.

What is the best part of your current role?

There is a tremendous life science ambition in Scotland which can do good for the population of Scotland's health as well as the economic growth of our nation through both exporting and generating inward investment. Its great to be play a key role in the bigger picture and feel that you have helped.

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

- 1 Communication & Influencing Skills
- 2 Analysing & Strategising Skills
- 3 Personal Integrity



Mark Cook

www.linkedin.com/in/mark-cook-lifesciences

"Don't expect to be following the same career for a working life, be prepared to change, adjust and take a chance! Good or bad there will always be learning and keep looking forward!"

Qualifications

BSc Biochemistry, University of Aberdeen
MBA, Edinburgh Business School

Current Job

Chair Life Sciences Scotland | Chair ABHI Scotland
| Board Scotland NHS Pension Scheme & Scotland
Teachers Pension Scheme

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR



Susie Mitchell

Since completing your PhD what jobs have you had?

After my PhD I decided I was interested in a career that was linked in some way to clinical research. My first job out of the lab in 2000 was as an events manager for SMi London based in London's Canary Wharf – a global event producing company that specialised in Business to Business Conferences across a range of sectors. My role was to develop and deliver pharmaceutical conferences on leading-edge drugs and technology.

In 2001 – I returned to Glasgow after a year to take up the role of Research & Development Manager within the NHS in Glasgow. This role, based in the R&D Office I was responsible for the strategy, management and governance of clinical research happening on site. From negotiating drug trial contracts and budget management to ensuring all regulatory documentations were in place; it was an interesting and varied post.

After an enjoyable 5 years in the NHS, I was looking for a new challenge and became a senior consultant for around 15 months in AEAT/Momenta Scotland – a sustainability consultancy. I was programme lead for national and regional government grant programmes and contributed to bids to secure major contracts across a range of areas including health, transport and sustainable development.

In 2007, I become a health and equality policy officer in Glasgow City Council – which included a 1 year, 2-day a week secondment to Scottish Government where I co-developed

a policy tool to help policy makers equality-, human rights- and health-proof policies, programmes and major decisions. This tool was rolled out across the NHS in Scotland & published by the World Health Organisation. My day job was to lead on devising health policy for the City – including the development and management of Scotland's first local authority-led obesity policy. I was also tasked with mainstreaming health and equality considerations into all Council policies in line with relevant policy and legislation. Our team led on a major health inequality impact assessment of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, which would become the basis of Glasgow's legacy strategy for the Games.

After 4 great years in the City Council, I had the chance to apply for an exciting job in the Commonwealth Games organising committee as the accessibility manager. I was responsible for integrating accessibility and inclusion into all business planning to help ensure an equitable, once in a lifetime Games experience for all client groups from spectators to athletes. This involved an unforgettable 12 days down at the Paralympics in London learning lessons from the London 2012 experience.

I have a semi-professional parallel career as a session singer and songwriter – so a nice end to my Glasgow 2014 Games experience was to be asked to sing at the closing ceremony in Hampden Park with Dougie McClean with Kylie and Lulu joining us for Auld Lang Syne; an unforgettable (albeit nerve-wracking) moment in front of over 1 billion people around the world!

What does your current job entail?

After several years working on the Games, the role I am in now came up – based at Glasgow Science Centre. I am the director of Glasgow City of Science and Innovation (GCOSI) – regional partnership (connecting academia, business and government) that aims to raise the profile of Glasgow and the West as a world-class destination for science, creativity and innovation; and to better leverage the diverse assets that we have to drive inclusive economic growth that benefits everyone.

We have 3 major workstreams; 1 – telling the story of Glasgow and the West of Scotland's proposition in science and innovation today through major intelligence mapping exercises and broadcasting this information through a range of communications activities – from international events to media (TV, radio, print media).

2 – developing and delivering the national innovation summit for Scotland, the CAN DO Innovation Summit and VentureFest – Scotland's annual festival of discovery and innovation.

PhD Studied

Cancer Research
Beatson Institute for
Cancer Research

PhD Completion

2000

Current Job

Programme Director
Glasgow City of Science
and Innovation

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR



And 3 – development and management of a European Network comprising 20 cities that supports best practice sharing and collaboration in innovation policy and practice (www.iKEN.global). This was a legacy project from our shortlisted bid to become European Capital of Innovation.

What is the best part of your current role?

As I mentioned, some of the communications work we do involves working with broadcast media. As such the role has allowed me to dabble in the creative industries, including some radio presenting. I absolutely loved presenting and working with inspiring producers at the BBC. I've also taken part in Women's Hour shows in London and Glasgow. Again great fun and most importantly - a superb opportunity to talk about key topics like the under-representation of women in some STEM areas or make more visible the range of world-leading research and innovation that is taking place on our doorstep to a broad range of listeners!

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

- 1 A good communicator that enjoys meeting people
- 2 Good project management skills
- 3 A passion for science, innovation & creativity and telling our story to the world

Susie's Advice

Don't be restricted by what you think the system or other people might expect of you – what are your interests and what qualities would make you great for a particular role, whatever the role or the sector.

The job market is ever changing – pretty much every job I've done, I didn't know existed when my PhD ended! Keep your eye on the job market – new roles are popping up all of the time. For example, Scotland is a hive of new activities in the innovation and entrepreneurship space right now – with new programmes comes new job roles.

Don't look at a job description and rule it out because there are 1 or 2 things you don't have experience of - a research career gives you such a rich bank of transferable skills. If you show passion and willing – any job is accessible to you. Most of the jobs I've done, I had to do various tasks I'd never done before – from contracts & budget management to accessibility planning for a major sporting event! You can learn from others when you secure the role, or bring in external expertise, if there's a real technical need.

If you are going for a role that sounds interesting, but you want to know more about the day to day reality – just call someone doing the role and get the low down on what it involves – the challenges, the opportunities. I did this before my role with the NHS and it helped me to get my head around the role & also prep for the interview. Eternal thanks to that R&D Manager in Cardiff who was very warm and ac-



Susie Mitchell

commodating to a cold caller asking about his career!

Go to free events on topics of interest and network. There are so many excellent events across Scotland in all sectors- from fashion to photonics. The greater your knowledge and the bigger your networks, the greater the opportunities.

"Scotland is a hive of new activities in the innovation & entrepreneurship space right now"

PhD Studied

Cancer Research
Beatson Institute for
Cancer Research

PhD Completion

2000

Current Job

Programme Director
Glasgow City of Science
and Innovation

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH



Since completing your PhD what jobs have you had?

I initially followed an academic career path, with first a period of post-doctoral research at the University of Cambridge, then I was appointed to a Lectureship in Plant Science at the University of Oxford. I taught & researched there for 8 years, building up a small research team. During that period I became involved in the public debate about genetically modified crops, & became increasingly interested in the policy & regulation of GMOs. So when the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) recruited for a Head of GM Science & Regulation I decided to make a significant career change & move into the policy world.

I worked in policy roles in Defra for 5 years, first with the focus on GMOs, using the science I was very familiar with, & then moving to lead the team supporting Defra's Chief Scientific Advisor. This role involved a much wider brief, covering a very wide range of scientific areas, & including not only 'science for policy, but also 'policy for science'. It was interest in this latter area that led me to move to Research Councils UK (RCUK), the body responsible for co-ordinating the then-separate Research Councils, as Head of the RCUK Strategy Unit.

From RCUK, I moved to be Head of Research Policy at the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). When HEFCE ceased to exist in April 2018 I transitioned into the new organisation responsible for research funding & policy in English Universities, Research England, which is part of UK Research & Innovation.

What does your current job entail?

I am currently Director of Research at Research England. I lead a team of around 30 people, and we are collectively responsible for research policy and funding in English Universities. We allocate around £2 billion of funding each year (mostly as block grants to universities), develop policy frameworks and guidance for research, and are responsible for operating the UK's national research evaluation process, the Research Excellence Framework.

What is the best part of your current role?

Always difficult to identify a single best part. I get to work with some talented and dedicated people, both in my team and in the research system more broadly. And I really enjoy the diversity and challenge of the work that I am involved in.

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

- 1 Strong analytical skills (quantitative & qualitative)
- 2 The ability to make a convincing argument
- 3 The ability to understand and take account of different viewpoints



Steven Hill

"Look out for short placements or secondments in policy organisations"

Steven's Advice

In terms of tips, I would suggest seeking out opportunities to talk to policy makers about your research. And look out for chances to do short placements or secondments in policy organisations.

When I was a PhD student I wish I had known about the diversity of rewarding and interesting career options open to me. I thought there were limited choices, and I had a really inaccurate and misguided view that only an academic career could be fulfilling. I was so wrong!

PhD Studied

Plant Biology
University of Edinburgh

PhD Completion

1990

Current Job

Director of Research
Research England

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER MANAGER



Serena Broadway

Since completing your PhD what jobs have you had?

- 2008 – 2010: Analyst for pharmaceutical contract testing laboratory using my analytical expertise gained during my PhD using them in a small business.
- 2010 – 2011: Post-doctoral Research Associate (Northumbria University): The aim of this role was to increase industry engagement with research at the university.

What does your current job entail?

I work for KTN, the UK's innovation agency. I help food and drink companies innovate. I help them access the expertise and funding to make innovation happen. A lot of job involves networking with industry and academia and making connections. I also review funding applications.

I am the co-ordinator of the BBSRC Diet and Health Research Industry Club. The club is a partnership between BBSRC and a consortium of leading food and drink companies, which has awarded over £22M to enable high quality research within UK universities and research institutes. In this role I am responsible for the DRINC Community from making sure that the research projects are running on time, to communicating with the industry members and organising the dissemination events.

What is the best part of your current role?

Meeting lots of interesting people and having the autonomy to pursue areas of interest.

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

- 1 A good networker
- 2 Organised
- 3 Motivated

"Networks are key and remember that you never know when an old contact might turn up and be useful. So always be courteous"

Serena's Advice

I got my current role because I have both academic and research experience. So don't rule out working at industry, where a lot of interesting research is being conducted.

Networks are key and remember that you never know when an old contact might turn up/be useful. So always be courteous.

PhD Studied

Nutrition
University of Glasgow

PhD Completion

2008

Current Job

Knowledge Transfer Manager
Knowledge Transfer Network

APPRAISAL OFFICER



Since completing your PhD what jobs have you had?

- Post-doctoral researcher at Strathclyde university 2006-2009
- R&D role at Biofilm 2009-2013
- Appraisal officer at Scottish Enterprise 2014-present

What does your current job entail?

In my current role I assess R&D funding opportunities for companies wishing to undertake R&D projects in Scotland. These can either be companies already based here, wishing to start up a new business in Scotland or expanding existing international operations into Scotland. I will:

- Meet with companies. This can be a company from any technological sector; life science, engineering, software are most common but there have been a few whisky distilleries in there too!
- Get an understanding of the technical and commercial aspects of the project
- Advise the company on how to apply
- Review the application when it arrives
- Help secure approval for the project by presenting a case for support to senior management in SE

Sometimes this can be for £100,000 grants, but can also be considerably higher. The largest grant I have taken through this process was over £7m!

What is the best part of your current role?

Getting to meet companies, learning about such a wide range of new technologies, then being able to help these companies get their projects off the ground which at the same time helps to grow the Scottish economy.

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

- 1** An interest in the commercialisation aspects of research
- 2** Being comfortable meeting a diverse range of people from different scientific and non-scientific backgrounds, and being able to quickly understand the technical and commercial merits of a given project
- 3** The ability to adopt a calm yet empathetic approach to dealing with people. Often we get to give good news to people (which is great), but when we have to reject applications (which sadly does happen) it can be quite a skill to deliver this news in an understanding manner



Andrew Ingram

"Keep an open inquisitive mind"

Andrew's Advice

When conducting research in the lab, try to consider what commercial applications your research may have. What the commercial opportunity may look like and how you would take it to the market. This is not something that I considered at the time I was doing my PhD, but is something I need to do in my current job.

We often look for candidates that have PhD's, as a strong technical background is essential but also industrial experience is of value as well, so avail yourself of any opportunities to work with a company performing industrial research, either as part of your studies or after your PhD/post-doc is complete.

Aside from that, keeping an open an inquisitive mind is always of value when assessing grant applications and learning about new R&D projects. Thankfully most PhD students have this skill in abundance anyway!

PhD Studied

Chemistry
University of Strathclyde

PhD Completion

2006

Current Job

Appraisal Officer
Scottish Enterprise

DIRECTOR OF TALENT + SKILLS



Since completing your PhD what jobs have you had?

My career wasn't always a bed of roses – I started a PhD straight from graduation and was bullied by a terrible supervisor – it took me a few years working in all sorts of jobs and ultimately as a technician to build my confidence again to apply for the PhD that I completed. This turned to my advantage, because by that time I had been taught the techniques I needed, and I'd developed a work ethic! After this, I did 2 postdocs, working on ion channel molecular biology. During these I developed an interest in fluorescence and in particular, in functional microscopy – using microscopes to look at functions, or proximity, or conformations of molecules, for example – and I made sure I really knew how things worked. This led to a couple of Wellcome Trust Fellowships, developing technologies for detecting protein molecular proximities inside cells or membranes and during that time I also had an MRC grant. Once my Fellowship had ended, I moved from Edinburgh University medical school to join Heriot-Watt, establishing a new Research Institute from scratch at that time. I really enjoyed this, and it was a fantastic opportunity to not only progress my own research, but to help people form new collaborations, set up seminars, PhD programmes, develop other people's careers and studentships, and learn a lot about people. I think this was pretty successful and I was able to make a positive difference. During this time, I had EU funding as well as being able to set up the Edinburgh super-resolution imaging consortium (www.esric.org) with MRC/BBSRC and EPSRC funds, and being involved with some other large research projects. Another thing I really enjoyed in addition, was being on advisory Boards and Panels, both in the UK and internationally – I'd started

to realise that there are opportunities outside my own research and in helping the broader scientific community. It was mostly great fun – but once I'd stepped down as head of Institute, I felt the need to do something new.

What does your current job entail?

I am currently the UK Research and Innovation Director for Talent and Skills (UKRI is an 'arm's length' agency of the UK government that is the largest funder of research in the UK with a multi-billion-pound budget). This job is developing strategies to support technicians, doctoral students and research fellows (ie people – I don't like the term 'Talent'), on the national scale. I work with some really talented people in UKRI and across different governmental departments, visiting lots of places and learning all the time. At the time of writing this, we are in the middle of Covid-19 lockdown and this is bringing lots of new challenges and amazing opportunities – I believe passionately that research and innovation is the way out of both the pandemic and the ensuing recession and we are all working hard to ensure the budgets and structures to enable this. It's been a really steep learning curve and enormously stimulating – I finally took my own advice that I offer to others, and looked outside academia for ways to apply my knowledge and skills. I am still research active and keep my university job 20% of the time.

What is the best part of your current role?

I find that moving out of my 'comfort zone' (I'd been an academic for many years) and into something new is really challenging and stimulat-



Rory Duncan
@profroryduncan

ing. And I work with really clever and dedicated people.

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

- 1 Listening
- 2 Learning
- 3 Patience

Rory's Advice

Take personal responsibility for your own career and development, don't hope for things to fall in your lap. Really grasp the fact that the skills you are learning now, in whatever you are doing, are important and sought-after by other employers in different sectors – it's easy to overlook that. Don't get too focussed on the minutiae of your research project – keep your eyes up, do different things and keep learning new skills. Future careers are going to be varied and changing a lot – and the world needs experts who are able to work flexibly in different roles and sectors now, more than ever.

PhD Studied

Cell Biology
University of Edinburgh

PhD Completion

1990

Current Job

Director of Talent and Skills
UK Research and Innovation

SPECIALTY REGISTRAR



Since completing your PhD what jobs have you had?

I went from my PhD into a postdoc position working on malaria vaccine research at the National Institutes of Health in the US. Due to a number of frustrations with the career path I was taking, I decided to divert towards Public Health. I did a Masters in Public Health and then moved to be a Healthcare Scientist (principally a job of scientific evidence interpretation and communication) at Health Protection Scotland. After this I got onto the NHS public health training programme which runs similarly to medical specialty training (hence the strange title).

What does your current job entail?

The registrar programme is a five year scheme to train people to become consultants in public health (of the same seniority as medical consultants in other specialties). This is a flexible scheme which has allowed me to work on a wide range of projects including national mental health policy, public health system reform, research, infectious disease management and service development in a low-income country. I'm soon to go to do some work in NHS Shetland and subsequently Scottish Government, all within this role.

The work is varied but includes a mixture of coordination, influencing, management, communication, evidence-interpretation & research skills.

NB: Although I have a Masters in Public Health, this was not necessary to attain my current job.

What is the best part of your current role?

I get to argue about what a fair and healthy society looks like and how we can get there.

What top 3 qualities are required for your job?

1 Curiosity/Love of learning – the job is varied, covering topics as diverse as infectious disease, gender, climate change, housing and homelessness, social isolation, socioeconomic inequality, mental health and wellbeing... You have to be able to get up to a reasonable level of expertise in a short space of time and make the most of the expertise of others.

2 Strong social justice principles – At the core of public health is an understanding that there are unjust and avoidable inequalities in society. Much of the work undertaken is to address these inequalities, often in the face of opposition from different agendas. A strong set of principles is often what drives work forward and motivates most public health professionals.



Paul Southworth

3 Communication and diplomacy skills – Many of the levers of power to have an impact on public health are not within the direct control of public health professionals. As such, much of the impact comes from communicating with and influencing those who have the levers.

"I wish I'd known that my PhD skills are transferable & there are so many other options available to use them"

Paul's Advice

It's an unfortunate fact that academics are generally only knowledgeable about career options within academia. My top tip for pursuing a career in public health would simply be to go out and find people working in the area and talk to them. People are normally very happy to talk about the work they do, the ups and downs, and how to get into it. The public health community in particular is a very friendly and open bunch of people.

PhD Studied

Biomolecular Science
University of Manchester

PhD Completion

2010

Current Job

Specialty Registrar in
Public Health, NHS