

Managing Assets

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What are your assets?

1. People

- Lindsay Hall's talk

2. Lab Space

- This talk (briefly)

3. Equipment

- Lindsay Murray's talk

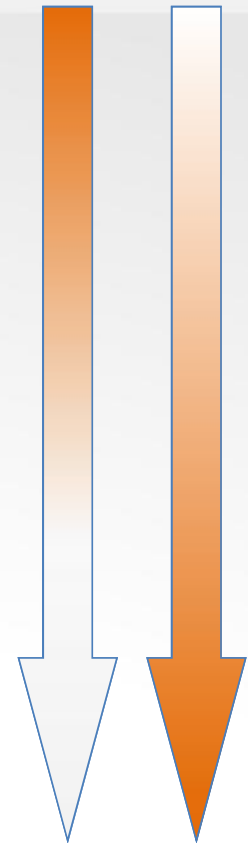
4. Funding

- This talk



Who am I to advise you?

- Postdoc, MRC Lab Molec Biol, Cambridge
- Lecturer in Biochemistry, U Bristol
- Royal Soc Research Fellow, U Bristol
- Visiting Fellow in Genetics, U Melbourne
- Prof of Molecular Genetics & Microbiology, U Birmingham
 - Head of Biological Sciences
 - Head of Chemistry
- Director of Science and Technology, BBSRC
- Head of College of Science & Engineering, U Edinburgh
 - 7 academic departments
- Senior Vice-Principal, U Edinburgh
 - Planning, Resources and Research Policy

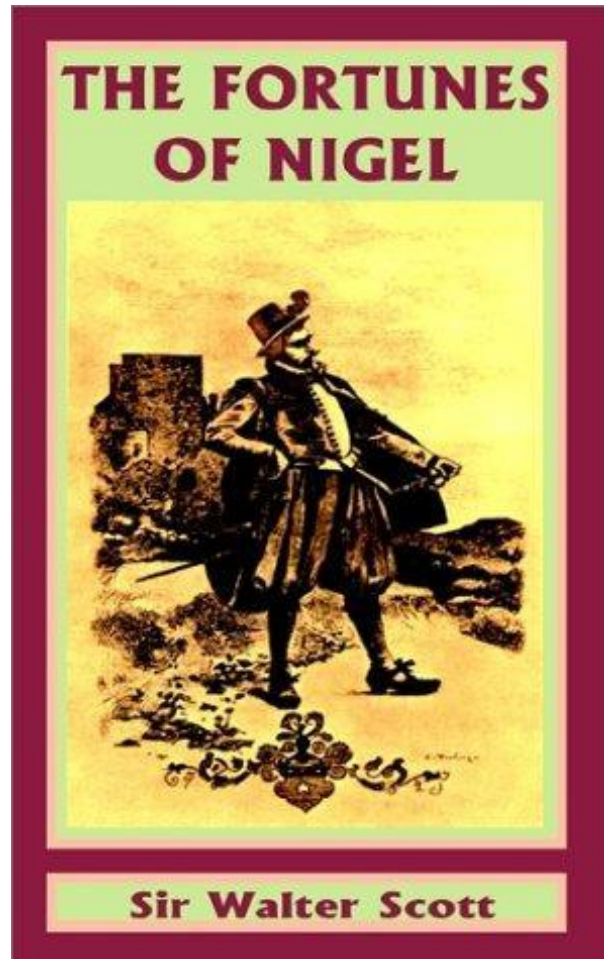


Research Admin



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Experience counts for something



But even with experience you
get things wrong.

Hopefully it comes good in
the end!

Asset 1: The research team

- Principal investigator
- Postdoc(s)
- Student(s)
- Technicians
- Other support staff
 - Technical services, Estates, Finance, HR, etc.



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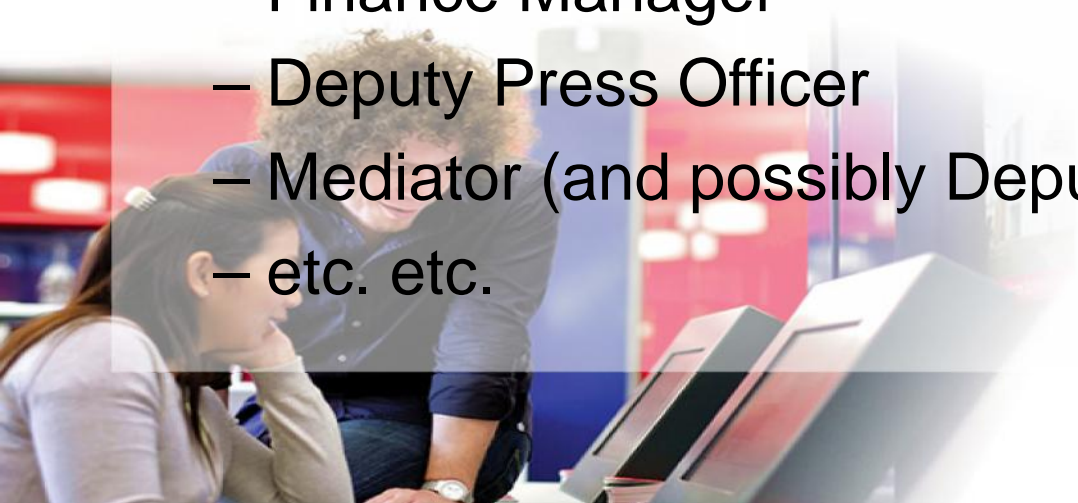
The PI's role

- Running a research team is like running a small company
- You are the:
 - CEO
 - Senior Research Officer
 - Company Finance Officer
 - Company HR Manager
 - Press Officer
 - etc. etc.



The Postdoc's role

- You head a division of the company
- You are the:
 - Deputy Chief Executive
 - Research Officer
 - Finance Manager
 - Deputy Press Officer
 - Mediator (and possibly Deputy HR officer)
 - etc. etc.



The PG Student's role

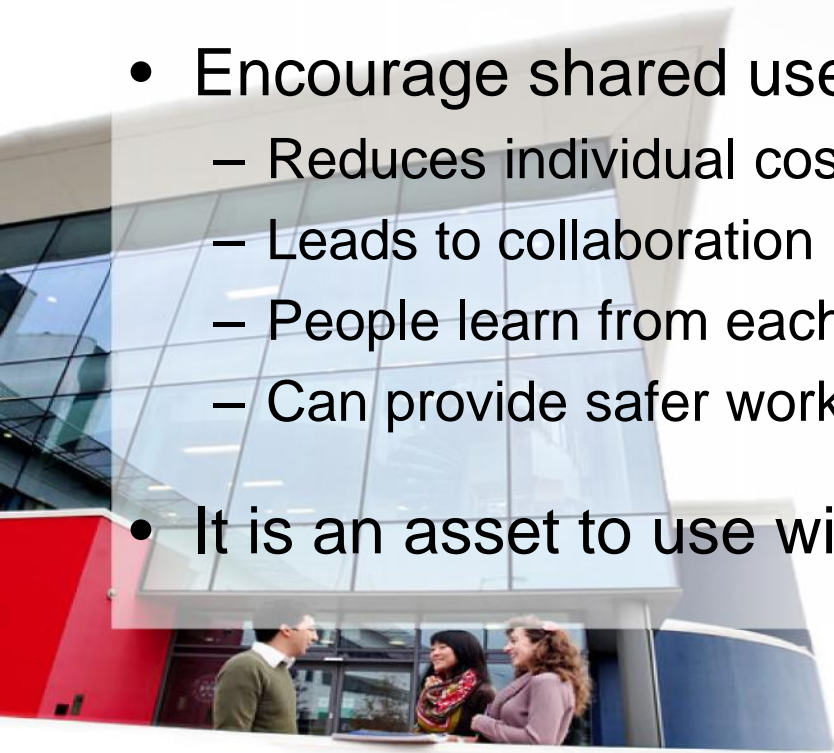
- You are a self-motivating employee
 - Manage your own time
 - Manage your own expenses
 - Write reports
 - Work in a team



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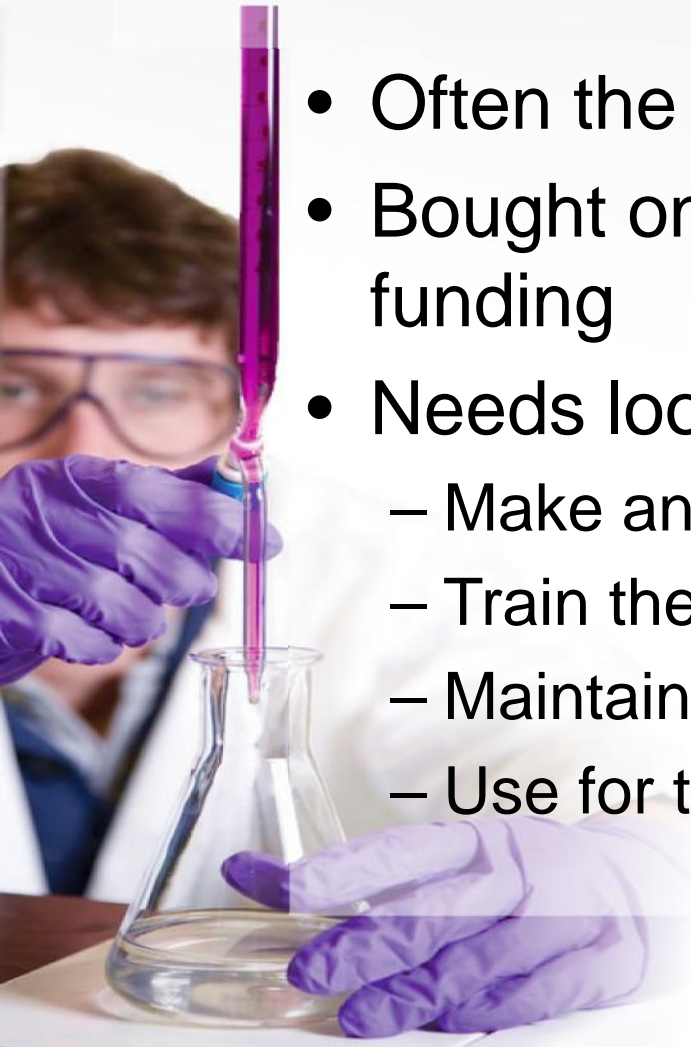
Asset 2: Lab Space

- This is often in the gift of a Head of Department
- Historic precedence can cause problems
- Encourage shared use of lab space and facilities
 - Reduces individual costs
 - Leads to collaboration
 - People learn from each other
 - Can provide safer working (e.g. out-of-hours)
- It is an asset to use wisely with sensible rules



Asset 3: Equipment

- Often the most expensive individual asset
- Bought on grants, charitable donations or institution funding
- Needs looking after properly
 - Make an individual responsible
 - Train the users
 - Maintain according to manufacturer's recommendations
 - Use for the purpose it is intended!



Asset 4: Funding

- Several types:
 - Research Council / Charity project grants
 - Government bodies
 - International grants
 - Individual fellowship grants
 - Contract research
 - Donations
- All require some form of accountability



Seek Advice

"I am going to visit Dr Richardson [...] he being a person of experience is going to tell me the best means of extracting funds from Government."

Charles Darwin to his sister, Caroline, 1837

In an institutional context:

- Experienced researchers
- Research Office
- Research Funder

- Read the grant conditions



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What makes a successful grant application?

UK Research
and Innovation



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



EPSRC
Engineering and Physical Sciences
Research Council



Economic and Social
Research Council

Innovate UK



Research
England



BBSRC
Biology and Biosciences
Research Council



MRC
Medical Research
Council



Science & Technology
Facilities Council



NERC
Natural Environment
Research Council

- Is it high quality research?
- Is it really high quality research?
- Are you absolutely sure it is high quality research?
- Is the case for support clearly written and not overloaded with detail?
- Has someone read it who is reasonably expert in the area?
- Have you had someone read it who doesn't know the area in detail?
- Have you properly justified the resources?
- Have you indicated where it matches the Funder's priorities?
- Are there opportunities to improve chances of success (commercial partner; New investigator scheme)?
- Have you answered any referees' comments robustly and sensibly?
- Have you received feedback on failed applications?

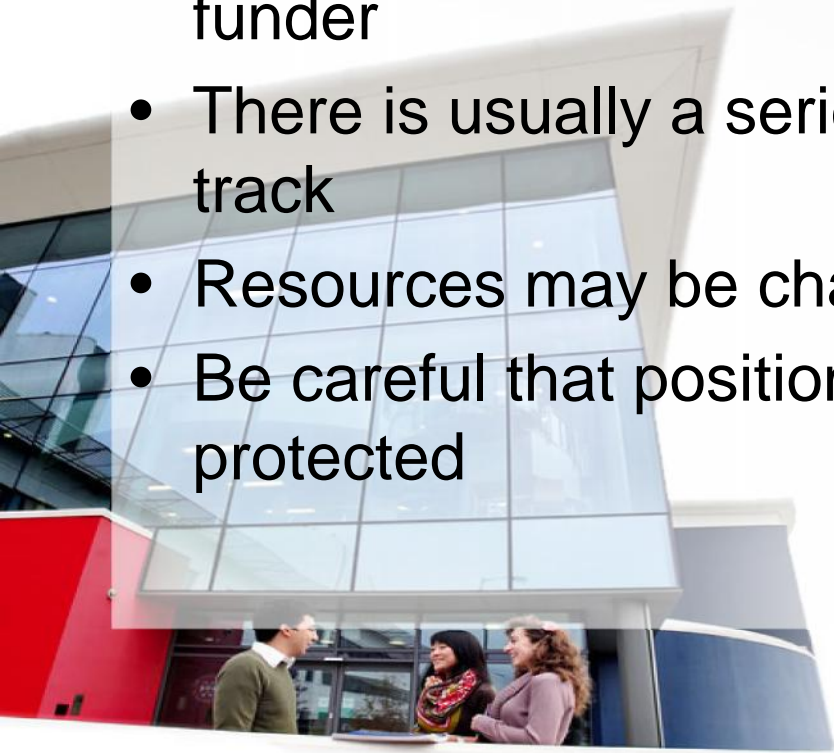
You've got the grant – what next?

- Do what you said you were going to do
- Applying for money and then working on something completely different is fraud
- Nobody expects your ideas always to work out – that's research
- So, if you then need to do something different to the proposal, consult the funder
- If you can't hire to a position in time – don't start the grant; ask the funder for a no-cost extension



Contract research

- There is often a perceived outcome
- The proposal will frequently be drawn up jointly by the PI and the funder
- There is usually a series of meetings ensuring the research is on track
- Resources may be changed during the project
- Be careful that positions (for postdocs, students, technicians) are protected



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Maintaining resources

- Stay within budget
- Ensure your people know what they are allowed to spend. Train them.
 - Beware the kit-happy student
 - Beware the go-it-alone postdoc
- In a busy lab, there will be project cross-funding. It is expected, but needs to be managed
- Be clear what funding is allowed (e.g. animals)
- Some funders (EU, industry, charities) may audit



Can Postdocs hold grants?

- Yes, for a Fellowship grant (may require current or future institutional commitment)
- For many funders, only a permanent employee can hold a Project grant
- But PIs do not have a premium on ideas
- A postdoc can be a Recognised Researcher (some funders allow Co-investigator) on a grant held by a member of staff
 - Recognised that they contributed to the ideas
 - Must be employed on the grant

Budget sensibly



"Wouldn't a single helix be cheaper?"

- What is allowed?
- Is there a normal amount? (e.g. for consumables)
- What about overheads?
- Are the staff posts correctly costed?
- Have you costed central technical services?
- Can the research be completed in the time requested?
- Is there co-funding available?

BBSRC considerations

- BBSRC can fund:
 - Salaries for postdocs, technicians, etc.
 - Part of PI's salary (hours *pro rata*)
 - Consumables
 - Equipment (with caveats!)
 - Central services
 - Travel and subsistence
 - Estates costs
- $\geq 10\%$ funding from industry may promote your grant in committee
- 20% of FEC comes from Institution



Other funders

- Other UK Research Councils – similar to BBSRC
- Wellcome grants – overheads and other on-costs are different
- Science Foundation Ireland – different again
- Government Departments and industry should fund 100% FEC



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Reporting and outputs

- UK Research Council and Wellcome grant outputs reported through *Researchfish* for 5 years beyond grant
- An end-of grant report form may be required
- Sfl outputs are reported through the SESAME system for up to 10 years beyond grant
- IP rests with institution not funder
- Contract research often requires frequent reporting and IP arrangements differ
- Details vary between grant schemes



So why all this reporting?

- Research funders get their money from other sources
 - Wellcome from the investment income
 - Supposed to align with Henry Wellcome's will!
 - Research Councils from BEIS which gets its money from HM Treasury
 - Sfl from Dept Business Enterprise & Innovation
 - Industry from its own resources



But remember...

*Science is a wonderful thing if one does
not have to earn one's living at it.*

- Albert Einstein



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Thank you.

Good luck!



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