

# IMPERIAL

## Career Moves

A guide for staff

People  
Function

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# Welcome

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**Welcome to Career Moves. The guide for professional, technical and operational staff. This guide is to help you understand the different types of careers you could consider, and the moves you could make, at the University.**

We believe in providing opportunities for staff to progress their careers. We want to support and retain talented people through a commitment to learning and development, establishing clear career pathways and ensuring that the sharing of regular helpful feedback and the discussion of personal objectives is an inherent part of the employment experience at Imperial.

Thinking about your career can be a challenging task. It can feel hard to prioritise the time when you are busy in your 'day job'. We want to help you with tools and support that will assist you with this task. Our career guidance will allow you to think about the options available to you in terms of progression and development. Imperial values are also an important factor in career development at Imperial, and you will find references to values across the toolkit.

We think this toolkit will help the University retain great talent and improve the development of new ideas and skills movement around the University by people moving into roles they may not have previously considered open to them.

The toolkit shows the Imperial Values in action;

- Respecting you as a learner, with choices about how to progress your career
- Encouraging developmental conversations with your manager, with honest feedback based on Integrity
- Promoting Collaboration across the University by using your skills in other roles
- Creating opportunities for innovation by doing different things and doing things differently
- Continually supporting and developing staff increases our chance of delivering Excellence in how we work and what we achieve

We are committed to making the University a great place to work for all staff, at all stages of their careers and across all roles and disciplines. This guide is part of that commitment. I hope it is a useful resource for you wherever you are in your career journey.

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# Career Factors and Moves

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There is no “magic” career formula for careers. There are many different factors in play which are specific to you and sometimes out of your control. For example:

**1**

A role being available at the right time

**2**

Being in the right place

**3**

Outperforming the competition

**4**

Knowing, and being open to, new opportunities

**5**

Choosing a role that is right for now and for your long term aspirations

**6**

Being and feeling “ready” for the challenge

**7**

Having the right balance of knowledge, experience and behaviours for the role

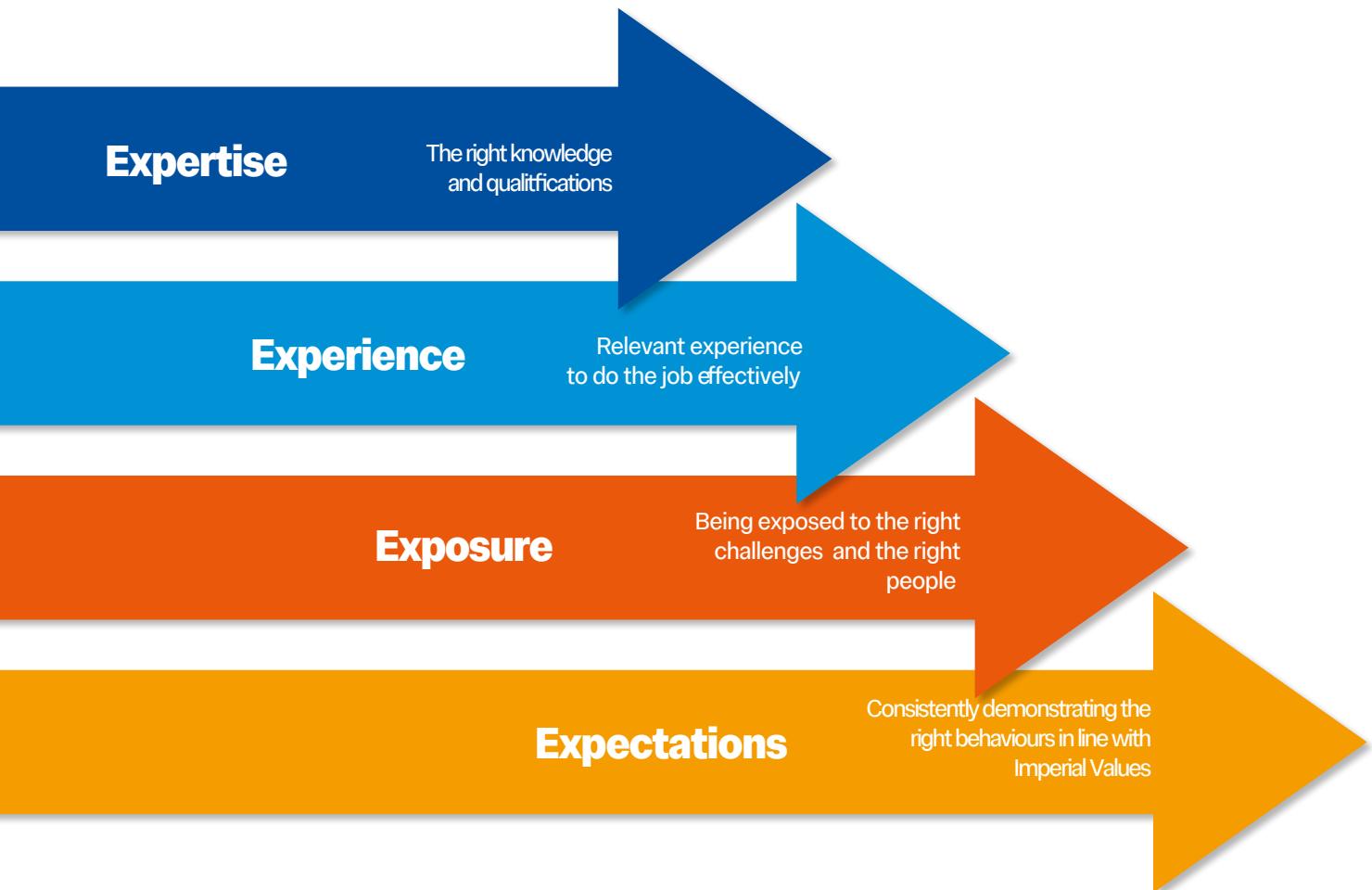
**8**

Having the right skills in your toolkit to match the opportunity

**9**

A vacancy or opportunity being available when you are ready

It's important to keep in mind that Career Moves are not always just about having or gaining specific Expertise or qualifications. Experience and Exposure have a big impact too, so seek out ways to get involved in areas you want to work in and always remember the importance of building your network.



# Guidance for Staff

You are in charge of navigating your career. Your manager and the University will help you with guidance. Remember that every career pathway is different, so keep an open mind to opportunities, seek out experiences to help you develop and enable you to be “ready” for your next move.



Think about what you want in your career



Seek out opportunities to get involved and experience different roles (e.g. ask if you can shadow, seek a mentor etc)



Timing is critical, you might be “ready” when there aren’t any of the right opportunities for you at Imperial – so you may want to seek a role elsewhere



Build your network in the University and beyond



Speak to your line manager about your career aspirations in your 1:1 and **ARC** meetings



Sometimes an opportunity might present itself that will require a big deep breath and diving in when you feel “not ready” – in this case, seek out support to help you swim!



Look out for opportunities beyond your current team, department, faculty and Imperial



Keep your CV / career history and personal statement up to date so you’re “ready” as and when an opportunity arises



Self-assess your skills and experience against those needed for a role or opportunity and then ask your manager/mentor to give you feedback on what they think



Seek out and take full advantage of the opportunities to learn and develop your knowledge and skills at Imperial



Career paths are rarely linear, so be open to changing direction when an interesting opportunity arises

To see the workshops and support available to you, please look at the [Learning and Development](#) pages on the web.

# Guidance for Line Managers

As a manager, you should be supporting your team members to develop themselves and navigate their own careers. Remember that every career pathway is different, so help each person seek out the right opportunities to develop their careers.



Think about what your team members could do next and encourage them to consider opportunities



Seek out opportunities for your team members to learn, get involved and experience different roles (e.g. working on projects in different areas)



When someone is "ready" but there are no internal opportunities that are right, be sensitive if you talk to them about finding something outside the University to help them progress



Use your network in the University and beyond to support your people's career development



Speak openly to your staff about their career aspirations in your 1:1 and ARC meetings



Help those who you know "could" do a new role feel confident that they can jump in (particularly those who underestimate their skills)



Be clear on the opportunities beyond your team, department, faculty and the University and TELL your team about them



Seek to understand your team members' "career stories" and remind yourself that people have done more things than their current role may suggest



Help your team members by honestly and openly assessing their skills and experience against those needed for a role or opportunity and give them feedback to help them develop



Be prepared to let great team members "go to grow" rather than "holding on" to them



If you see a skill in one of your team members that could be brilliant in another team, discuss it with both parties in case there is an opportunity for progression



# Guidance for Hiring Managers

As a hiring manager, you can help careers develop by welcoming internal applications. It takes significant time, resource and cost to hire and induct a brand new staff member and make them effective.

Internal candidates are often effective sooner as they have institutional knowledge and a support network already place.



Think about what knowledge, skills and experience you really need someone to have in the role



Be open to staff getting to know your area – offering real life experiences such as job-shadowing, mentoring or project work



Consider what is needed "now" and "next" rather than opting for a "copy" of the previous role incumbent (this also helps with increasing diversity of thought in your team)



Use your network in the University to identify staff who may have most of the knowledge, skills and experience you are looking for



Speak openly to staff who are interested in the vacancy – tell them more about the role and what you are looking for



Help those who you know "could" do the role feel confident to apply for your vacancy by actively encouraging internal applications



Be clear on the what is **ESSENTIAL** and what is **DESIRABLE** in the role you are hiring for and share this information with candidates



Seek to understand internal candidates' "career stories" and remind yourself that people have done (and are often capable of doing) more than their current role



When you have internal candidates in the recruitment process, **ALWAYS** offer personalised 1:1 feedback on how they did, so that they can make steps to improve



Be prepared to consider internal colleagues who fit most of the criteria for the role and then train them to do the other parts on the job



If you see a skill in an internal candidate that could be useful elsewhere in the University let them know to help with talent management

# Career Moves

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# Career Moves... taking the next step

As careers are rarely linear, we've defined six career move types to help you consider different types of career moves that you might want to explore.

These career moves can apply and should be helpful to all Professional, Technical, and Operational roles—whatever team, department, or faculty you are in, whether you are a new starter in a junior role or the Director of a department!

Everyone's career story is different, so over a lifetime, some people may make career moves that fit into one, some or all of the moves described.





# Ladder

The LADDER move is where you apply for and are “promoted” into a role within your current area / team / profession at the next level up from your current role.

- A **LADDER** opportunity is often based on a traditional hierarchy structure, so you will likely take on additional responsibilities and need to develop management and leadership skills as you progress
- It relies on your line manager / someone more senior than you moving on and creating a vacancy OR a change in structure creating a new role – this means it is hard to predict when a role may be available for you to apply for
- In reality, it is quite rare to have a **LADDER only** career internally as the next upwards step option may only be available on a few occasions in your career and there are usually fewer positions available the more senior you become, so there will always be a ceiling
- Some upwards moves are less “steps” and more “jumps” and are harder to make than others, such as your move into line management roles and the move from team management levels to leadership
- Career ladder moves can happen internally when a vacancy is available at the right time for you or you may need to consider external options if you feel ready when there are no vacancies

## Great for people who:

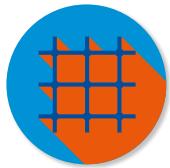
- Want to develop their skills and knowledge within their current area of expertise
- Enjoy the challenge and responsibility of managing and leading other people
- Have a good grasp of their skills and how to apply them effectively in their team

## Challenging for people who:

- Prefer to focus on their own work / tasks rather than managing others
- Like to expand their expertise or network beyond their current area

## REALITY CHECK!

You can risk becoming very narrow in your expertise. Remember that management isn't something everyone enjoys!



# Grid

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The GRID looks at moves within the same subject matter / profession to build knowledge, new skills and breadth of experience to enable a future upwards move.

- “Move sideways to move upwards” is the motto of the **GRID** career moves
- A **GRID** move is often a more achievable / realistic way of moving upwards over time
- **GRIDS** focus on moving within your team, function or department to a role at a similar level, with complementary skills that broaden your capabilities and enable you to be ready to make an upwards move over time
- **GRID** moves can, and regularly do, happen internally as there are usually more opportunities for sideways moves and zig-zags as people in different roles move on
- If you are keen to develop within your area / subject matter / profession and want to stay in the same team / department or faculty, the **GRID** may be a good option to consider
- Showing **GRID** moves on applications / on your CV can help you internally and externally as they show you broadening your skill set

## Great for people who:

- Want to develop their skills, knowledge and experience across their current area of expertise / profession
- Enjoy the challenge of learning new things
- Have a good grasp of their skills and how to apply them effectively in different situations

## Challenging for people who:

- Prefer to focus on applying themselves with depth in one specific area

## REALITY CHECK!

There are still limited numbers of upwards movements, so sometimes the sideways option is the only move available



# Voyage

VOYAGE applies to opportunities within the University, in your profession or subject matter – taking your skills to new areas and with new people.

- **VOYAGE** career moves add new experiences to your toolkit and deepen your experience
- Like the **GRID**, it can involve sideways moves, only in a different area, with different people, different subject matters with different challenges
- A **VOYAGE** move can help you gain wider experience and critical exposure that may help in an “upwards” move when an opportunity becomes available
- It may also involve sideways and upwards moves (like the **GRID**) when you move across roles, teams, departments or faculties
- It can be very interesting to work with different areas and to apply your expertise in different ways on your **VOYAGES**
- **VOYAGE** career moves can (and often do) happen internally and many people spend significant proportions of their careers using this type of move – especially once they’ve found their niche
- There are often more opportunities to make a navigated career move across the University than there are **LADDER** or **GRID** moves which are limited to opportunities within your existing area

## Great for people who:

Enjoy working with new and different people  
Have a good grasp of their skills and how to apply them in different situations  
Proactively seek out new challenges and are up for change  
Have found their niche in work they are passionate about and an expert in

## Challenging for people who:

- Prefer working where they know the ins and outs of the team / area / function
- Like to work with the same group of people

## REALITY CHECK!

You may find challenges with timing here – staying too long in one area versus not enough to have time to really impact in another



# Rooted

ROOTED is about utilising your expertise in the same role, enriching your knowledge and skills through depth of experience and continually adding value to your team.

- **ROOTED** options focus on choosing to stay in the same role in the same area for a period of time
- It can help you gain a depth of experience and expertise that ensures you can perform at high levels
- It may also involve taking on additional responsibilities at the same level, adding new strings to your bow
- People who take on **ROOTED** career opportunities are often called upon to add expert opinion and to share their knowledge with others (e.g. new starters)
- Some people choose this option for the long term, valuing developing the mastery of their subject and applying their skills
- Some people opt for a **ROOTED** career option for a period of time when they have other priorities to balance (e.g. taking a qualification / caring responsibilities)

## Great for people who:

- Like to become experts in their subject matter
- Like working with the same group of people
- Value Stability
- Like to know the intricacies and details of how their role and the team works
- Keep their professional and operational skills up to date – keeping up with changing tech etc

## Challenging for people who:

- Prefer the challenge of new things
- Like to work with different people

## REALITY CHECK!

There is a risk of becoming “we always do it this way”. Your role may need to change to keep up with evolving structures and priorities



# Expedition

An **EXPEDITION** career move looks beyond your current role, function, expertise and is about discovering new things, developing different skills and working with different people.

- **EXPEDITION** career moves involve doing a different role, in different area, with different people, different subject matters and different challenges
- It can help you gain wider experience and exposure that may help in an “upwards” move when an opportunity becomes available
- It can be very interesting to work with different areas and can help you appreciate and utilise your full range of skills
- **EXPEDITION** career moves can (and often do) happen internally and many people spend the earlier years of their careers using this type of move to help locate their passion and find their niche
- Secondments are often a way that people go on **EXPEDITIONS**, and can be a great way to “try out” a new role, area, team or profession
- There are often more expedition opportunities than you may think – being open to opportunities, however unusual, is the key to success

## Great for people who:

- Enjoy the challenge of new and different things
- Are open to exploring and learning new things and work with different people
- Aren’t afraid of the risk of failing
- Are looking to change their profession

## Challenging for people who:

- Like to be the expert in their area
- Like to work with the same people
- Want to keep doing things the same way
- Are risk-averse

## REALITY CHECK!

If you stay on your expedition for too long you may become seen as a “Jack/Jackie of all trades” and “Master of none”



# Boomerang

A **BOOMERANG** career move goes beyond the opportunities at the University, discovering new things in a different organisation and then returning at a later date with new skills and experience in your toolkit.

- **BOOMERANG** career moves involve seeking out opportunities in a different organisation
- The moves could be defined as a **LADDER, GRID, VOYAGE** or **EXPEDITION** move – just in a different organisation
- It can help you gain a wider experience and exposure that may help in an “upwards” move when an opportunity becomes available back at the University, in your new organisation or in another!
- Some people opt for **BOOMERANG** career moves when the opportunities are not available at the right time for them at the University or when a wider or different experience is needed to help them make a future move
- There will be more opportunities “out there” than the University can offer internally and may include staying in the same profession or industry, or a complete change

## Great for people who:

- Enjoy the challenge of new and different things
- Are open to exploring and learning new things and working with different people
- Aren't afraid of learning new things and being the “new” person
- Can seek out opportunities and use their network

## Challenging for people who:

- Like the security of working in one organisation
- Like to work with the same people and keep doing things the same way
- Are risk-averse

## REALITY CHECK!

The grass isn't always greener in different organisations so do your due diligence before making a move!

# Further Resources

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To access support, resources and further learning around career development such as our Thriving at Imperial offer, Mentoring scheme and Coaching please visit the Talent and Culture web pages:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/talent/>