

What to Do After PhD? – Pros and Cons of Pursuing Postdoc

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“Received my PhD. Where do I go from here? What to do after PhD?”—is one of the most common challenges for students who have recently graduated. So if you’re stuck at this point of deciding whether to go ahead with academia or switch to a non-academic career, you’re not alone! How do you plan on taking what you have learned in your PhD and capitalize on it? How do you start your new career or use your PhD to take the next step in your existing one?

What to Do After PhD?

After having spent endless hours conducting your research and passing up enjoyable opportunities to complete your dissertation, you have finally attained the coveted doctorate degree. It’s a remarkable feat! But one struggle that holds on to you is—what do you do now that you’ve finished your PhD?

Be it from your seniors at the university or just having heard it from scholars in your field, one thing you may have realized is that tenure-track positions in academia are hard to come by. Despite the “default” propensity of PhD graduates pursuing academic research positions, they’re now moving beyond it. Additionally, an uncertain future in academia is a factor of concern amongst all. Here we shall discuss what to do after

PhD?—and focus on the pros and cons of pursuing postdoc to make a calculated decision.

Should I Pursue Postdoc?

Navigating through the career waters after PhD can be quite treacherous. Moreover, with the job market in academia being intensely competitive, even students with excellent academic caliber aren't assured of getting a position.

While the competition is persistent, [doing a postdoc](#) is becoming a prerequisite for a successful career. However, your zeal and confidence of wanting to stay in academia can take you a long way. The preliminary postdoc benefits to consider while [applying for postdoc](#) are:

1. Additional time to expand your research through funding.
2. Publish more research work to support or expand your research conducted during Phd.
3. More opportunities for networking and collaboration.

Pros of Pursuing Postdoc

While the answer to “What to do after postdoc?” can vary for every researcher depending on their interests, the undeniable benefits of a postdoc position can't be overseen.

1. Career Development Prospects:

Pursuing [career as a postdoc fellow](#) allows you an extended period to work on your research after your PhD. Furthermore, it offers you more flexible opportunities to leverage laboratory facilities than you could during your PhD. It allows you to travel freely for conferences, which lead to meeting scholars from your field and making newer professional connections. Additionally, a postdoc fellow gets opportunity to upskill themselves in their research field and allied domains.

2. Advanced Research Opportunities:

Given the immense value that a postdoc position poses, it opens doors to newer research opportunities. This is not just restricted to [independent research](#) but also to collaborative research. Consequently, due to lesser teaching and administrative responsibilities, it will provide you with time to publish more research work. Additionally, it allows you to revise your project cycle, begin a new project, and gain expertise in a given subject. Furthermore, it lets you collaborate with international researchers to work on similar projects. More importantly, as a postdoc your chances of receiving grants increases based on your success as a researcher during PhD.

3. Technique Development Opportunities:

As a postdoc fellow, you have more time to acquire new technology and research skills. In addition, it lets you gain experience in allied fields that you work in with your colleagues. This leads to an excellent opportunity to perfect your distinctive set of skills and learn advanced techniques in growing times.

4. Intellectual Development:

A postdoc fellowship is a distinguished phase in your career to focus exclusively on your intellectual development. Moreover, it is an important and most influential part of your research training. Therefore, [choosing a postdoc](#) can bolster your ability to pursue an advanced and successful research career.

Cons of Pursuing Postdoc

Despite the impressive benefits, considering the flip side of pursuing a postdoc position is imperative before taking the big decision.

1. No Tenure-track Guarantee

The uncertain career prospects in academia does not guarantee a [tenure-track position](#) even after completing your postdoc. According to a survey, only 30% of postdocs in the United States, and 20% postdocs in the United Kingdom succeed in acquiring a long term academic position. Moreover, some even have to climb through a series of postdoc positions before reaching a stable academic position. This predicament often leads many postdocs to quit academia and move to an industrial career.

2. Lack of Support

As postdocs are expected to work as an independent researcher, they often receive little to no professional advice or training from experienced researchers at the university. On the contrary, some institutions take advantages of the postdoc fellow as a teaching or researching captive. Furthermore, you may also experience poor working conditions as a result of being neglected by your department and [surviving postdoc](#) position becomes difficult.

3. Monetary Challenges

One of the major disadvantages of pursuing a postdoc position is meager salaries. The financial situation of postdoc fellows is so critical that an assistant professor is paid more than them, although fractionally, but yes!

4. Over-qualification

After struggling to acquire a stable academic position, postdocs often try to switch to industrial jobs. In this process, it is found that postdocs are [over-qualified](#) for industrial jobs and have to begin from scratch in the new field.

It's undoubtedly a great feat to have successfully defended your PhD dissertation. How do you decide? What to do after PhD? What do you choose? Let these pros and cons help you in taking a well thought out decision. Tell us how this article helped you in the comments section below! You can also visit our [Q&A forum](#) for frequently asked questions related to different aspects of research writing and publishing answered by our team that comprises subject-matter experts, eminent researchers, and publication experts.

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