

## A Guide to ACADEMIC REGALIA

**The Hat**  
Is it possible to wear something dorkier? No. That's why you wear it.

**Gown Colors**  
Colors on gowns are standardized according to the discipline by the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume, an organization that suspiciously returns no results when you search for it on Google.

**The Staff**  
Every Wizard should have one.

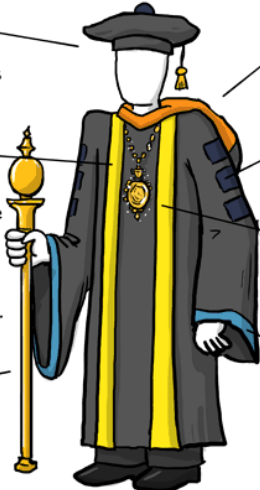
**The Hood**  
Do not use unless you are a Sith Lord.

**Velvet Stripes**  
Smooth, like our hypotheses and conclusions.

**Bling**  
Yo yo, Rappers and University Presidents have something in common.

**Notable Colors that reflect their Discipline:**

Agriculture	"Maize"	
Accountancy	"Drab"	
Fine Arts	"Brown"	
Public Policy	"Peacock Blue"	



Nothing says, "We've learned something" like dressing the same way they did in Medieval Times.

WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

JORGE CHAN © 2014



# WHY NOT PROSPER?

PARAS NAIK, UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL  
2024 PDRA & RESEARCH FELLOWS HALF AWAY DAY





# Prosper



- \* What is Prosper? Why is it (likely) useful for you?
- \* My experience with the first Prosper Cohort
- \* Thoughts about Prosper
- \* Backup slides: General advice



# Prosper goals

## Prosper: A New Model for Postdoc Career Development

- \* Led by Liverpool (and now being expanded across UK)
- \* Open up the huge talent pool that exists within the postdoctoral research community, to the benefit of:
  - \* postdocs themselves
  - \* managers of researchers & PIs
  - \* employers
  - \* the wider UK economy
- \* The Prosper model and its impact is published in this [2023 paper](#).





# The Prosper Portal



- \* The **Prosper Portal**, freely available to all, is the online hub for all developed content and resources.
- \* Resources built around three themes:
  - \* Reflect; Explore; Act
- \* Includes a Career Development Navigator and a Learning & Development library, with a focus on self-coaching.
- \* These resources are provided for **your development**, they can only help you if **you** take advantage of them!



# Prosper Postdoc cohorts

- \* I was part of the first (non-trial run) Liverpool Prosper postdoc career development cohort. Over six months:
  - \* Twelve career development sessions (Though most of these any postdoc can attend!)
  - \* Six hours of professional career coaching (in groups of 10 postdocs) [valued > £300]
  - \* An accountability-cohort buddy scheme
  - \* A dedicated MS teams channel







# Applying to a cohort



- \* When a new cohort is announced, you can apply via the Researcher Hub (see last slide).
- \* Motivational statement:
  - \* Why now is the right time for you to join
  - \* What excites you about the cohort /  
How you'll use the experience to maximise your own career development.
- \* Since it is a cohort, you should also make clear what skills/experience you can bring to the cohort



# Why you?



- \* An opportunity to **reflect** upon how far you have come (as well as how far you have to go).
- \* Some moments of space for you to **explore** your future aspirations.
- \* Develop the motivation or the courage to **act**
- \* If you haven't noticed yet, you will...  
**Career development awareness and plans is becoming an increasing part of job and grant applications.**
- \* The **Concordat for Researchers** guarantees development time



# Also

Everyone Has Imposter Syndrome Except For You





# Why me?

**Nobody knows ahead of time  
how long it takes anyone to  
learn anything.**

- \* I have been a postdoc since 2007. I've engaged with a career development course on average once a year (some short, some long).
- \* I wasn't sure I should apply:
  - \* Will I be taking a spot from a fresh postdoc who would value this?
  - \* Haven't I seen it all by now?
- \* If you know me, you know that I want to share my *experiences* and what I have learned with those who have similar aspirations.
- \* The cohort was looking for someone like me, and there were several items on offer seemed potentially useful. So I applied.



# The Cohort

- \* Cohort Introduction

Joe Carmignani

me

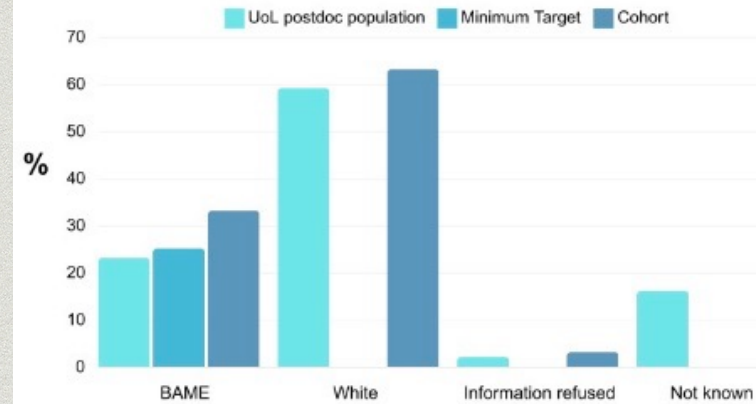




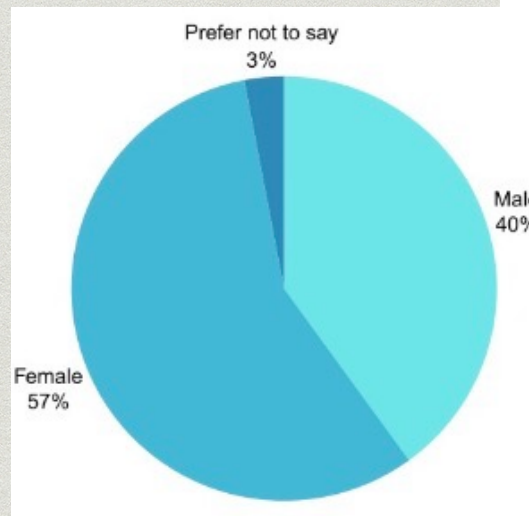
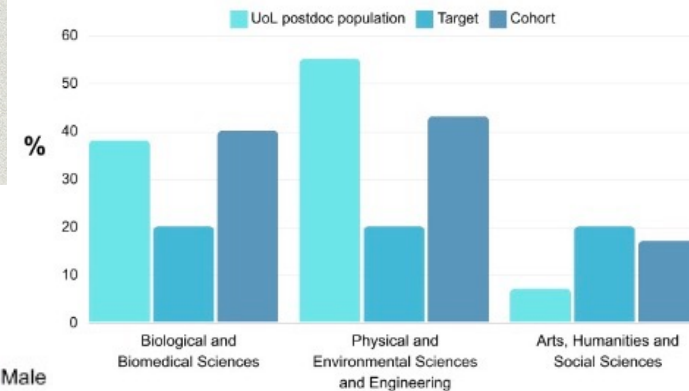
# Cohort makeup

- \* Would have been nice to also see years-past-PhD and/or age, though there were people in the cohort that were > 10 yrs past PhD and/or “about my age”.
- \* Really had a diverse group.

Cohort makeup by ethnicity:



Cohort makeup by disciplinary area:





# Coaching

<https://www.strengthsprofile.com>

- \* Had a very good Career coach
- \* Several activities and discussions
- \* Most useful to me: Strengths Profile





# People



- \* Buddy Groups
  - \* Opportunity to network / share information with University colleagues
    - \* 1st group: 3 other postdocs, was a good experience, met twice but haven't met again since.
    - \* 2nd group: 2 other postdocs, we all got along very well, have met three times and plan to meet again soon.
- \* Other colleagues
  - \* Saw at least one person go from the stress of questioning their future to getting a fellowship. Dreams do come true!



# Other highlights



- \* Skills audit was useful  
(sometimes I forget I have skills)
  - \* Resilience, persistence are skills
- \* Career identity
  - \* Quite personal, but helped me to understand what I value  
(and which of those I am getting in my current role/job)
- \* Sunk-cost fallacy session was good  
(even though I have sunk all the costs)
- \* “I don’t make plans, **I make options.**”



# Issues

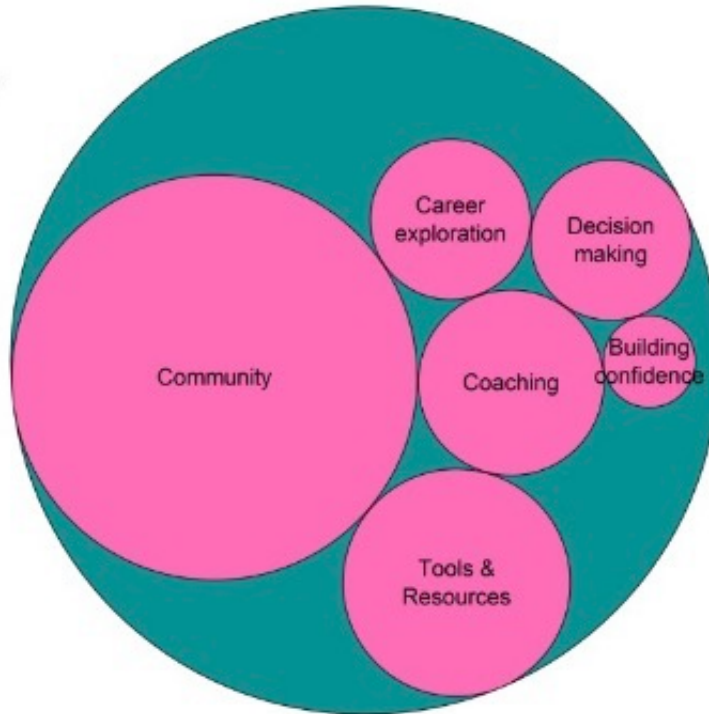


- \* Some of the sessions more useful than others
  - \* There was a session on using ChatGPT to come up with career ideas... it was interesting, but the results were a bit depressing since most of those things I don't want to do. Some I would, but I don't know if I would make the space to develop the relevant skills.
- \* I was fortunate enough to be able to attend almost every cohort session. However scheduling could be a challenge for some. Also some activities are in person — some of the nicer features would be missed if stationed away.
- \* After failing miserably trying to “network” on Twitter, I am now putting in a little more effort into LinkedIn, but still haven't done “informational interviews” or “warm networking.” (and far from “thought leader” status)
- \* I still haven't engaged enough with the Prosper Portal itself. I want to. (Yet “struggle” to carve out the time.)



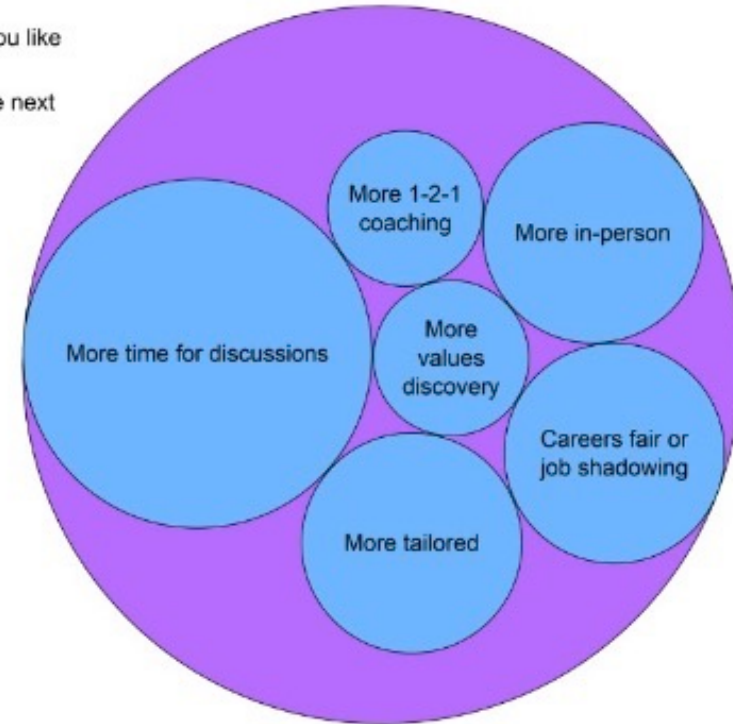
# Feedback

1 Any highlights?



“ [The highlight was] connecting with and meeting other postdocs – finding out that even if they’re in different disciplines the struggles are the same!

4 What would you like to see going forward for the next cohort?



Taking into account the valuable feedback received, along with our incoming end-of-cohort evaluation, we'll be implementing **several changes for the next cohort:**

- **More time for discussion**
- **Better optimised scheduling**
- **Rebalancing in-person vs. virtual sessions**



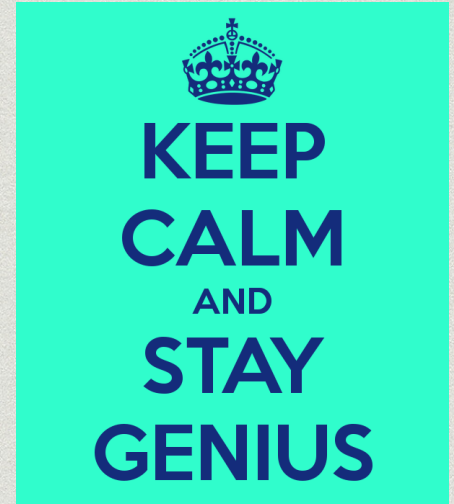
# Prosper more



- \* Everyone's "Prosper journey" will be different
- \* Prosper is only a fraction of the researcher development offerings at the University of Liverpool
  - \* Find them all on the University of Liverpool Researcher Hub  
<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/>
  - \* It is worth taking the time to go through it
    - \* Identify what Liverpool offers you that aligns with your interests, and give it a try!



# Resources



- \* University of Liverpool researcher hub
  - \* <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/>
  - \* All information on Prosper, etc... is there!
- \* Vitae Researcher Professional Development
  - \* <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/>
- \* My old but still very relevant talk on researcher resilience
  - \* [https://www.shintonconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Naik\\_Navigating\\_Funding\\_online.pdf](https://www.shintonconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Naik_Navigating_Funding_online.pdf)







# My Very General Advice (1)

- \* Start early, **START** early, **START EARLY**.  
You are attending this Away Day, which already gives you a head start.
- \* **Pursue opportunities**, if you can
  - \* Many are only available to you for brief periods of time.
- \* Early in your career, employers look for **potential** instead of results.
  - \* **Results** help of course, but research careers are *unpredictable*.
    - \* You *may* go without publishing or recognition for long periods, possibly for reasons not under your control.
    - \* **Sell yourself** when you have successes!



# My Very General Advice (2)

- \* **Network!** It matters!
  - \* You will find people to reach out to, either as an occasional contact for information and advice, a friend, or perhaps even a mentor. Sometimes it is intimidating, but rewards could be high.
- \* Create your own opportunities (they are out there).
- \* Sometimes it's just about gathering up the courage to get started. It may take effort to make *courage* easier to find. (Courage is a skill too)
- \* A Prosper cohort can get you get started, and I recommend joining one even if you are at a later postdoc stage — but definitely at an early stage! In any case the Prosper Portal has many resources to help you. Use them!



# Other Thoughts



- \* **No shame** in no longer wanting to progress or changing fields.
  - \* I am still in this profession because **I feel confident that I could have an impact on the future of particle physics and lead a meaningful research program at a top research university.**\*
  - \* That view may *change*, and that's **OK**.
  - \* (Hasn't changed for me yet. But participating in the Prosper cohort made me realize that it's not "over" for me if I choose to join the "real world.")
- \* *You* have to decide when you are willing to tilt your *work-life balance* in one direction or another.
  - \* Some manage it all; for others it's not worth it.
  - \* Don't compare yourself too hard; *be you*, but **keep learning**.



