



The Concept of the Supervision of Beginning Researchers, Including Postdoctoral Fellows at Palacký University Olomouc (2022–2025)

One of the main goals of the university is to educate, train, and support talents at the onset of their career path. Investments in beginning researchers return to the university as an improved quality of scientific outputs and education. The investment is also advantageous for the researchers themselves as it motivates them to deliver maximum performance.

The concept of the supervision of beginning researchers at Palacký University Olomouc (hereinafter referred to as the "Concept") aims to map out support across the university and its faculties (and higher education institute) and to design an action plan for activities and processes that will lead to a functional system support and supervision of beginning researchers at UP. This action plan introduces short-term and medium-term objectives UP strives to achieve.

The definition of the goals and subsequent actions of the concept is based on the 2021+ Strategic Plan for UP Educational and Creative Activities, which is in compliance with the strategic and conceptual documents of the Ministry of Youth, Education and Sports of the Czech Republic, the Higher Education Act, and the Constitution of Palacký University Olomouc.

The Concept also builds on the action plan [Human Resources Strategy for Researchers](#), based on which UP was granted the HR Award in 2020, and on the [UP Gender Equality Plan](#) adopted in late 2021. All these documents comply with the objectives of the EU policy for research and innovation within the [European Research Area](#).

The concept targets postgraduate and postdoctoral students. The latter are defined as graduates with a PhD or comparable degree awarded over the past five years.¹ The concept is devised as an umbrella document for all the eight faculties. In terms of support for postdoctoral fellows, it is also applicable for the CATRIN higher education institute.

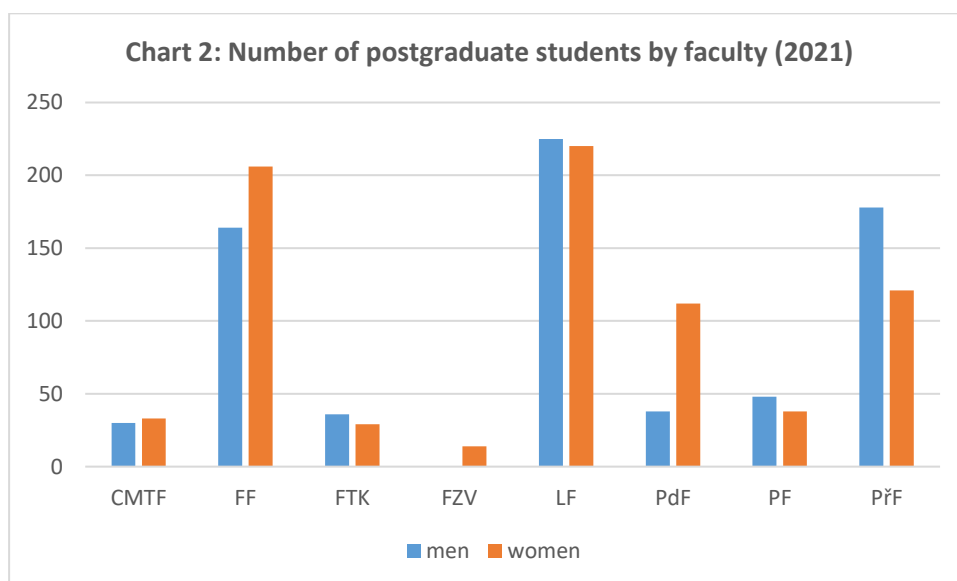
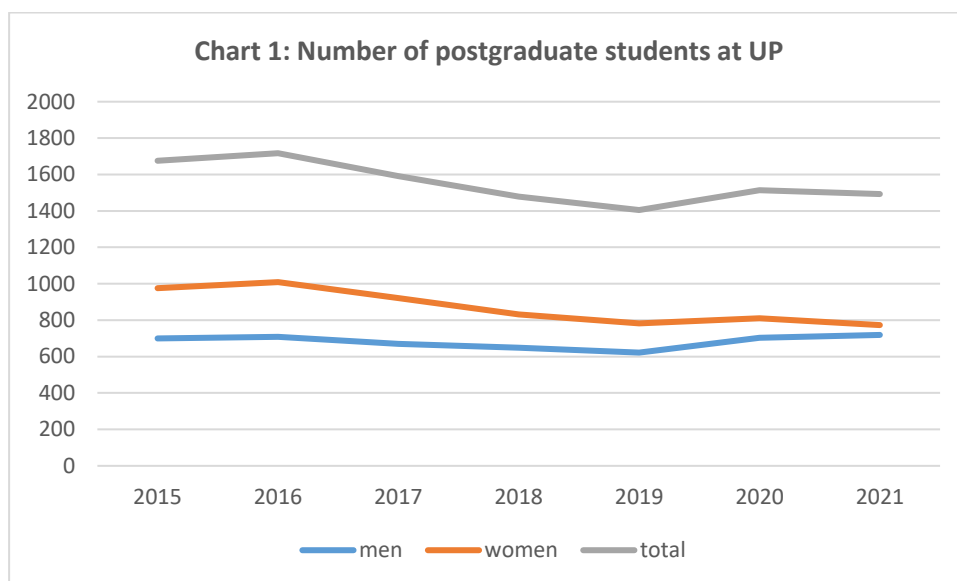
1. Current situation

1.1 Postgraduate students

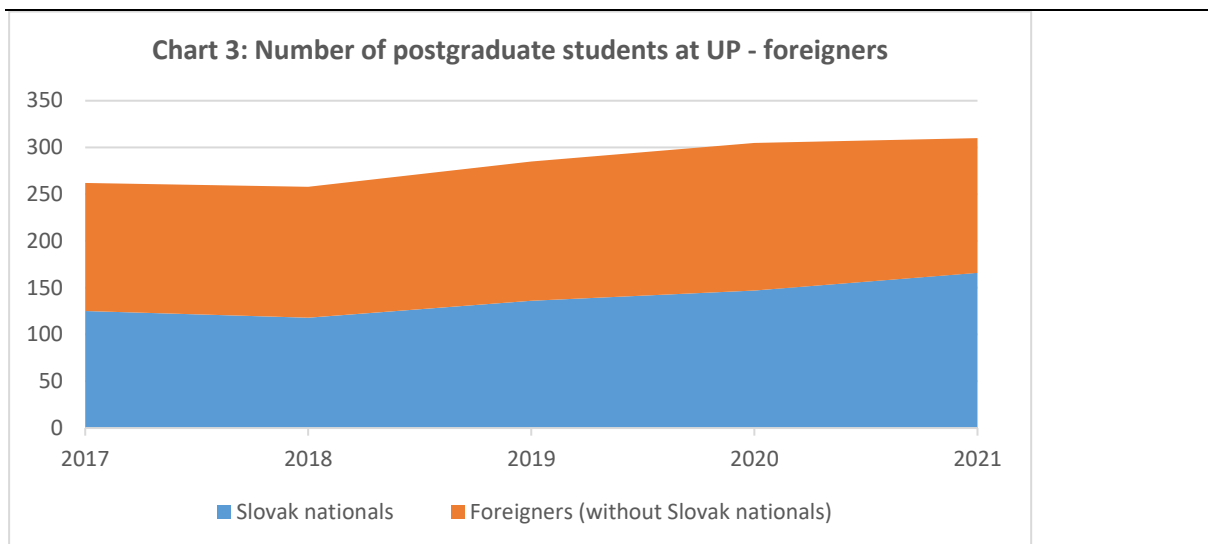
The UP recorded 1,492 postgraduate students in 2021. The figure confirmed a continuing slight increase compared to 2019 (Chart 1). The Faculty of Medicine recorded the highest number of postgraduate students, followed by the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Science (Chart 2). Until 2021, UP had focused on transitioning postgraduate study programmes under institutional accreditation. As

¹ According to the definition of the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic, a postdoctoral fellow is a person who earned a PhD or its equivalent no more than 5 years earlier; for persons caring for minor children, the period spent on maternity and parental leave is not included in this limit; for persons suffering from a long-term illness, the period of incapacity for work and other similar long-term legal obstacles to work (for example long-term care for a family member/loved one) are not included in the limit.

of 31 December 2021 it had 480 study programmes accredited (244 full-time and 236 part-time programmes), and had 8 foreign-language double/joint/dual degree/cotutelle programmes. In 2021, UP had 310 foreign postgraduate students, of whom 166 were of Slovak nationality (Chart 3).² The largest number of students-foreigners (excluding citizens of Slovakia) studied at the Faculty of Arts (56), followed by the Faculty of Science (27).



² We assume that citizens of the Slovak Republic do not enrol at foreign-language programmes, yet they are statistically recorded under the category of foreigners.



Only a small part of postgraduate students are also employed by UP (6% of all postgraduate students as of the end of 2021). Their all-university FTE is 58.45. The largest number of postgraduate students employed by UP was at the Faculty of Education (26 persons at FTE 13.39), while the highest number of postgraduate students in terms of FTE per person was at the Faculty of Physical Culture (22 persons at FTE 17.04). Postgraduate students usually have the minimum of a 0.5 contract. Nearly half of employed postgraduate students (49%) had a 0.5 contract, while 10% had 1.0 FTE.

1.1.1 Postgraduate student support at UP

Support for UP postgraduate students constitutes a priority area of the Palacký University Olomouc Strategic Plan for Educational and Creative Activities for the Period 2021+.³ It defines the following key problems: **high levels of inbreeding, low inter-discipline and inter-university mobility, low levels of internationalization, a lacking incentive programme, and insufficient central support for postgraduate studies and students.**

The OP RDI project *Improvement of Postgraduate Student Grant Competition Schemes and Their Pilot Implementation* (IGRAČEK) was launched in 2020. The UP Rector's Office opened a new office for postgraduate study programmes and projects in the second half of 2021 in order to improve the quality of postgraduate studies at the UP and provide methodological support. Postgraduate programmes however continue to be largely run by individual faculties.

Faculties provide information for postgraduate students on their web pages, whose content is focused only on the formal requirements of the study. The Faculty of Arts has issued a "brief guide for postgraduate students" dealing with the most frequently asked questions of postgraduate students. The Faculty of Education set up in late 2021 the Facebook page *Doktorská škola* (Postgraduate School), aimed at improving the teaching competences of beginning academic staff at the faculty. The faculties leave other areas such as **adaptation, socialization and career support primarily up to supervisors and heads of departments.** The situation is similar in the case of support for mobility students. The faculties provide applicants with basic information services. Any other support, beyond administrative tasks, is up to the individual approach of supervisors or departments.

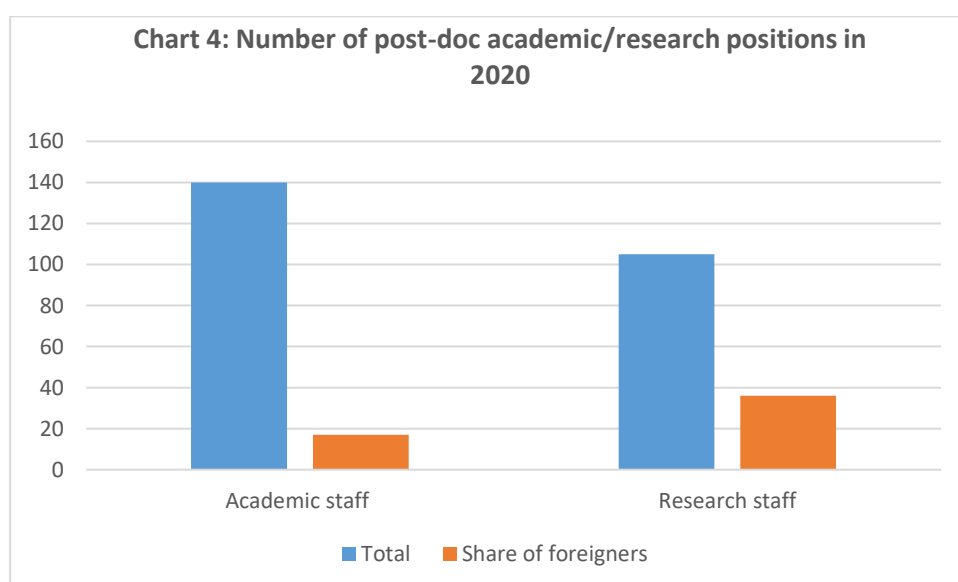
³ Palacký University Olomouc Strategic Plan for Educational and Creative Activities for the Period 2021+. Available at https://strategie.upol.cz/fileadmin/userdata/cm/strategie/doc/sz/SZ_2021_UP-en.pdf

Postgraduate students may use all the services available to bachelor and master students. Faculties have their own counselling and support centres that provide study-related, psychological or career counselling. At the central level, this is the responsibility of the UP Career Centre, which provides free consultations to students within two years of their master degree concerning resume writing, LinkedIn profile creation, and funding applications.

1.2 Postgraduates within 5 years since earning PhD – postdoctoral fellows

There is no official postdoc position listed in the *Palacký University Olomouc Job Catalogue* (hereinafter the *UP Job Catalogue*). However, some of the UP faculties and the higher education institute advertise Postdoc Researcher and Junior Researcher positions within the OP RDI projects of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (Post-UP 1,2; Postdoc2 or Mobility I-II). These positions aim to attract the best experts of this category from the Czech Republic and abroad. The vacancies are published on the university website or on the Euraxess portal and are classified as R2 based on the [European Framework for Research Careers](#). It may happen though that the faculties decide not to hold a selection procedure and instead, recruit a recommended person (which in the case of researchers does not contradict the current UP Procurement Code) or fill the position with their graduate. This practice unfortunately only promotes inbreeding. Newly hired postdoctoral fellows are usually employed as *level A2 or level A3 researchers*. In the case of academic positions, they are usually hired as *assistant professors or academic staff* (A3 salary band).

In 2021, UP had 275⁴ postdoctoral positions (Chart 4), where the category requirement is a PhD degree or a comparable degree awarded abroad over the past five years. The highest number of postdocs is employed by the Faculty of Science (113, which is 15.5% of all academic/research positions at the faculty). A similar percentage is reported by the Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Law, and Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology. The other faculties report up to 5% of all positions filled by postdocs (the number of postdocs is likely to be higher; the results are distorted by the inconsistent reporting by faculties). Foreigners make up 22% of all academic and research positions. The highest number is at the Faculty of Science, where they represent less than 30% of all postdocs.



⁴ For the purposes of the annual report according to the requirements of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports.

1.2.1 Postdoc support at UP

Palacký University does not currently have in place any strategic plans for the development and support of researchers who, after earning a PhD continue their academic or research career at UP. The university has not adopted a *Career Code*, the process of adaptation and training is not systematic, and in general postdoc support is up to the faculties. Educational events are available within the lifelong education system, and for example the Faculty of Education has plans to organize special trainings in the future.⁵ Another faculty that has begun to focus more on postdoctoral fellows is the Faculty of Law. Based on an [internal standard](#), it is launching its first funding calls in 2022, and some of them are designed to support projects creating visiting postdoc positions. As with other UP employee categories, postdocs are welcome to use the support services of psychological or legal assistance. These centres provide a limited range of services for foreign employees.

2. Objectives and Action Plan

2.1 General goals

1. Creating a university-wide support system for postgraduate students, including excellent postgraduate student motivation;
2. Supporting career growth and creating a range of university-wide educational and development events to improve teaching, project and language knowledge and skills;
3. Developing a postgraduate student protection system and creating a socially safe environment.
4. Systematization of postdoc researcher positions at UP and formalization of postdoc career paths;
5. Systematization of postdoc training and support at UP.
6. Support for incoming postdoctoral fellows.
7. Increasing the competences of senior staff in the supervision and support of postdoctoral fellows at UP.
8. Funding of excellent postdocs at UP.

Action 1.1: A specialized information platform for postgraduate students

A specialized Czech-English information platform for postgraduate students will be developed as part of the UP central website. The platform will provide a clear overview of useful information related to postgraduate studies at UP and events held for postgraduate students (training seminars, expert-led discussions, conferences, etc.), and will serve as a directory to other UP pages that have not been centralized yet or are hard to find. The website will also summarize funding options, international mobility, and other motivational calls.

Performance indicator:

- The web platform and its regular updates.

Deadline: continuously through 2025

⁵ The UP Faculty of Education is setting up an educational platform for postgraduate students, postdoctoral fellows and beginning academicians in 2022, in collaboration with the Institute for Research and Development, the Institute of Education and Social Studies (Pedagogical Competencies Development Centre - CRPK), Department of Psychology and Pathopsychology, and other centres. The training platform will consist of six modules.

Action 1.2: University postgraduate conference

A university postgraduate conference will be held every year. The main goal of the conference will be to promote the integration and inter-faculty cooperation of postgraduate students. The conference will introduce a range of scholarship and funding options for postgraduate students and beginning researchers.

Performance indicator:

- Conference outputs (presentation, attendance sheet, photo documentation, print screens).

Deadline: continuously through 2025

Organized by: Office for Postgraduate Education and Research; Communications Office

Action 1.3: Introduction of new financial mechanisms to support postgraduate students

The university will develop and systematize financial mechanisms at the central level to support postgraduate students, including mobility students. The UP will propose and normatively anchor new forms of support as special-purpose scholarships for excellent postgraduate students, financial frameworks for supporting research mobility.

Performance indicator:

- Systematization of support for excellent postgraduate students; at least 230 postgraduate students supported.

Deadline: 2025

Organized by: Office for Postgraduate Education and Research; Study Office, Rector, Bursar, faculties

Action 2.1: Development of a system of further education and career counselling for postgraduate students

A series of educational events focused on teaching, language and soft skills, including Czech for foreign postgraduate students will be prepared. Career growth educational events will be offered on a regular basis. Senior staff training options will include educational events dealing with the support of career growth of UP postgraduate students.

Performance indicators:

- At least 200 postgraduate students trained through educational events dealing with career growth and other competencies. Of these, the minimum 20% will be held in a non-Czech language.
- The minimum of 50 senior staff trained in postgraduate career growth.

Deadline: 2025

Organized by: Office for Postgraduate Education and Research; RUP HR Office.

Action 2.2: Introduction of the institute of mentor at UP.

A mentoring programme will be introduced to allow transfer of experience between mentors and their younger colleagues. The goal of mentoring is career, professional, as well as personal development. A series of trainings for postgraduate students will introduce the mentor institute.

Performance indicators:

- Guidelines for mentoring at UP.
- Pilot verification of the institute on a selected group of postgraduate students.

Deadline: 2025

Organized by: Office for Postgraduate Education and Research; RUP HR Office

Action 2.3: Revision of the system of postgraduate student evaluation

Possible implementation of IS HAP for postgraduate students at UP is being analysed. The requirements and views of the faculties will be assessed with regard to the existing capacity and the development potential of IS HAP.

Performance indicator: Minutes of working group meetings

Deadline: 2023

Organized by: Office for Postgraduate Education and Research; RUP HR Office, Strategic Planning Office, Science and Research Office, faculties.

Action 2.4: Support for engaging postgraduate students in research activities

Greater involvement of postgraduate students in research projects based on employment contracts will be discussed with faculty managements. The goal is to support the career growth and work experience of beginning researchers at UP as much as possible.

Performance indicator: Minutes of meetings.

Deadline: 2025

Organized by: Office for Postgraduate Education and Research; RUP HR Office, Science and Research Office

Action 3.1: Development of mechanisms protecting postgraduate students at UP

In line with the *UP Gender Equality Plan*, a questionnaire survey is being conducted among UP students about their experience with inappropriate behaviour of students and staff at UP. Measures resulting from the findings will be proposed.

Performance indicators: Survey results and the measures proposed.

Deadline: 2023

Organized by: RUP HR Office

Action 4: Formal establishment of the postdoc researcher position in the UP personnel agenda

Definition of the postdoc researcher position in the UP Job Catalogue and its implementation into adequate UP internal standards and regulations (for example, internal salary policy). Systematization of the registration of postdoc researcher positions in SAP, and publication of guidelines for registering postdoc researcher employees at UP components. Building on the adopted UP Career Code, a career plan for the postdoc researcher category is proposed.

Performance indicators:

- Revised *UP Job Catalogue* and related legislation;
- Guidelines for adequate registration of postdoc researcher positions at UP components.
- UP Career Code defining the career path of postdoctoral fellows at UP.

Deadline: 2023

Organized by: RUP HR Office, Legal Department, Strategic Planning Office, Science and Research Office, faculties.

Action 5: Creating a plan of educational events focused on supporting career growth and work-life balance of postdoctoral fellows

Creating a plan of educational events for postdoctoral fellows about career growth, including specialized educational and developmental events for research and educational activities and personal development, such as the leading of (international) research teams, searching for and writing projects, and project management.

Performance indicators:

- A plan of at least 5 specialized educational or development events, two of which in a non-Czech language;
- Pilot verification of educational or development events on a group of at least 10 postdoctoral fellows, each attending at least 12 hours of teaching.

Deadline: 2025

Organized by: RUP HR Office, Continuing Education Office, Science and Research Office.

Action 6: Support for incoming researchers' adaptation at UP

Reinforcement of support services for incoming staff via the Welcome Office (consultation on arrivals in the Czech Republic, assistance with statutory obligations). Amendment of the adaptation plan for this job position.

Performance indicators:

- Amended adaptation plans;
- Services provided by the Welcome Office for incoming staff

Deadline: 2025

Organized by: RUP HR Office, Welcome Office

Action 7: Broadening the range of trainings designed for UP senior staff.

Integration of educational and development events aimed at supporting and supervising postdoctoral fellows into the system of educational and development events for UP senior staff. The events will include courses dedicated to work-life balance, return to work after maternity, etc.

Performance indicators:

- A plan of at least three educational events for UP senior staff, focused on supporting the adaptation and career growth of postdoctoral fellows.
- Pilot verification of the educational events and at least 20 UP senior staff trained.

Deadline: 2023

Organized by: RUP HR Office, Continuing Education Office.

Action 8: Introduction of new financial mechanisms to support excellent postgraduate fellows

UP will pursue external funding resources which will enable UP to improve its competitiveness in attracting excellent postdoctoral fellows by offering adequate financial remuneration. The university will develop and systematize financial mechanisms at the central level to support excellent researchers with a PhD degree.

Performance indicators:

- Financial mechanisms available at the central level for the support of current and beginning researchers at UP (for example regular internal competitions);
- At least 15 postdoctoral fellows supported with funds;
- Regularly updating UP postdoctoral fellows about new funding calls.

Deadline: 2025

Organized by: Office for Postgraduate Education and Research, Science and Research Office, Bursar.

3. Implementation and funding

The concept is set out for the years 2022-2025. The implementation of the action plan is primarily the responsibility of the Human Relations Office, the Office for Postgraduate Education and Research, and the Science and Research Office. Proposals for measures and outputs will be consulted by working groups formed as part of the HRS4R/HR Award implementation. By engaging representatives of faculties and the institute, we will ensure the information about individual activities is disseminated across the university. The concept is considered a “living” document, meaning it can be continually edited and updated.

Palacký University Olomouc undertakes to allocate funds from the organization's budget for accomplishing goals of the strategic plan of the university and hence for accomplishing the goals of the Concept. Other resources will be actively sought to ensure the realization of all activities of the Concept. UP aims to participate in the call of [the Johannes Amos Comenius Programme](#) and [Horizon Europe](#).