



Course 1: The Strategic Postdoc
Module 1: Positioning Yourself for the Postdoc

Session 4: Prepare to leave your PhD

Activity 4.2: Building Your Advisory Team

For this exercise, you will reflect on the mentors, role models, and advocates in your life and place them on your Advisory Team as you develop your PhD exit strategy.

An ‘Advisory Team’ is a group of people that you trust who can support you and advocate for you at different stages of your career. They provide you with personal and/or professional support. Think of them as your personal Board of Advisors.

- **Why do I need an Advisory Team?** During the PhD to postdoc transition, these people can help you navigate any roadblocks along the way and even reduce the power differential between your research mentor and you. They can also be constructively critical as you progress through each stage of your career.
- **Who should I put on my team and why?** You can put faculty members who are on your dissertation committee, or who have mentored you, or someone who supports your career and can provide you with professional development advice. Every Advisory Team will look different, but every member plays an important role and can support you in at least one area. Also, your Advisory Team might change as your career evolves, and you might need to have different types of people on your team at different stages.

Reflect on who could sit on your Advisory Team. Use the chart below to help you identify 1-2 people who could potentially fill each role. Some examples might be specific to your PhD-to-postdoc transition while others represent the people you want on your team for every stage of your career. Use the blank rows if you want to add more roles.

Your Advisory Team

Advisory Team Role	Role Description	1st Person	2nd Person
The Counselor	A listening ear who provides emotional support and even advice		
The Champion or Sponsor	A person in a respected and authoritative position who can navigate the political landscape and open doors for you		
The ‘Critical Feedback’ Mentor	A senior faculty member or senior level person who will give you critical feedback on important things		

	like grants, manuscripts, applications, research plans, tenure/promotion packages.		
The ‘Career’ Mentor	A role model in a career you want to pursue who can give specific career advice and help you avoid any potholes. They share resources to make you more competitive and guide you at each stage of your career.		
Thesis Committee Member	A faculty member on your committee that you have a good relationship with and who can advocate on your behalf.		
The ‘External’ Mentor	A faculty member outside of your institution that can counsel you or provide emotional support.		
Senior PostDoc Mentor	A senior postdoc who can directly mentor and support you in the lab or advocate on your behalf if you need to negotiate with your advisor.		
The Peer Mentor	A peer that you feel close to, with similar career goals, with whom you can compare notes as you both go through similar situations.		
Institutional Resources	Someone at your institution, like an Ombudsman, who can file a complaint for serious situations. They can start an official investigation on your behalf or direct you to other offices or institutional resources to support your cause.		