THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh Research Office

Researcher Development

Leadership Stories



NAME: Francesca Saggini
COLLEGE: College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
RESEARCH AREA: Romantic Drama
ROLE NAME: Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Individual Fellow

What does leadership mean to you in this role?
I am the PI on the project *Opening Romanticism: Reimagining Romantic Drama for New Audiences*.

I carry out original research work in the area of Romantic drama, I deliver research objects (both digital and analogic), I engage with diverse communities to raise awareness about my research area, research work at large and its societal implications.

I design, manage, and deliver my activities, in line with the deliverables I submitted with my project and under the supervision of my supervisor, Prof. Melissa Terras.

What supported your move into this role?
After many years of highly demanding administrative and teaching duties at my home institution, I wanted to explore the freedom of research and the novel affordances of engaging with stakeholders outwith academia. As Head of the Modern Languages Centre, I had enjoyed working with schools and local stakeholders in my home country. I wanted to broaden and deepen this engagement and move it on to the next level of international engagement. I knew that a research-intensive university and Horizon2020 would have given me the perfect chance to do so.

What type of skills do you use in this role?
It is a mix of soft skills and hard skills. As a vulnerable person, resilience during a pandemic had an extra call on me. I also found out that an international researcher must be flexible and, hopefully, you can expect flexibility in return. Sometimes it works better than others, of course, but creativity always gives me a hand. Looking out of the box, time management and hard-core commitment are key too. Finally, being able to effectively communicate one's own discoveries – both great and less so—should be the goal of research. The ivory tower needs broadband these days!

"I wanted to explore the freedom of research and the novel affordances of engaging with stakeholders outwith academia"

Has this role created any new opportunities for you that you wouldn't otherwise have come across?
Absolutely yes. On top of the unique experience of working abroad for the first time ever, in a university which is completely different from my home institution, the possibility of focussing on research has been of paramount importance. I have been able to go back to my original calling and get back in touch with what made me choose University employment many years ago. Regrettably, administration has now taken over, at least in Italy. The MSCA grant held the keys to freedom of research and offered me the opportunity to take my research on to the next level.

What is the main piece of advice that you would give anyone looking to move into a leadership role?
Fasten your seatbelts, charge up your batteries and just go for it!

Research Development: https://research-office.ed.ac.uk/researcher-development
Research Staff Hub: https://support-for-researchers.ed.ac.uk/