

## Results of the survey for researchers who worked at IASR during 2010-2017

Compiled: Reetta Muhonen, Laura Himanen

Altogether 51 (36 Finnish and 15 international) IASR fellows took part in this survey. The response rate was 53 percent. The respondents have been working at IASR at some point during the years 2010-2017: 29 percent of them worked as Professorial Fellows, the rest in the positions of Senior and Postdoctoral Fellows. Only two of the professors are from other countries than Finland, and the other one defines themselves as a “Scholar at risk”.

### IASR’s impact to scientific work

*Wonderful time of true academic freedom*

Most of all, IASR fellows appreciate having the time to focus on research and freedom to choose by themselves on what to concentrate. Among the respondents, freedom is considered to be the ability to focus on one’s own research and writing research papers. It means also receiving financial support to attend conferences and workshops. It is highly appreciated by the fellows, that the director gives full freedom to do research. Following the individual research plans is considered as priority number one at IASR. Some of the fellows hoped for tighter collaboration inside the group, e.g. co-authoring papers or writing joint funding applications. At the same time, it is recognized that people come to IASR to have time for their research projects, and any kind of activities endangering the precious time for research are not considered as part of IASR.

*We were respected as experts that did not need close supervision.*

The overall picture of outputs resulted from the time spent at IASR seems robust. All the respondents who answered the question at hand (n=46), report publications as an output of their collegium period (Table 1). 61 percent of the respondents state that the collegium period has resulted in new projects, and for 78 percent, time spent at IASR has resulted also in forming networks or other forms of cooperation. 70 percent of the respondents agree with the statement saying that IASR period has resulted in something that would not have materialized if they had not worked at IASR.

Did your time at IASR result in...	n	%
publications,	46	100
networks or other forms of cooperation,	36	78
projects,	28	61
something that would not have materialised if you had not worked at IASR?	32	70

Table 1. IASR outputs reported by respondents (n=46)

*I received major funding from the Academy of Finland (Academy of Finland researcher grant). This would not have been possible if I had not worked in the IASR. I was also extremely productive in terms of papers and I established a firm network while working at the IASR. My position now (tenure track) is also a result of working at the institute and producing several high-quality publications.*

In parallel with the freedom talk, it is mentioned that especially in the beginning of the IASR period, Fellows have had difficulties in getting rid of their previous duties, such as teaching and supervising. The second year at IASR is in that sense easier. The other thing taking time from doing research is the necessity to apply for the next posts and new research projects. In relation to the question on the things hindering conducting research while working at IASR (question no. 11), a Senior Fellow summarizes the problem of the fellows without permanent posts:

*Uncertainty about the future, which always affects people who have no permanent employment relationship. Part of working time therefore goes to the search for future jobs.*

Even if some fellows experience pressures to write research applications as disturbing for their collegium period, for others, and in the light of this survey especially for professors, academic freedom includes a possibility to take time to plan new openings:

*During my IASR year, I was able to launch a new area of research, which is now rooted in my Faculty's curriculum.*

## **Internationality**

Overall, IASR fellows have found conditions for internationalization good. Possibilities for internationalization at IASR derive much from the possibility to manage one's time during the collegium period. When there are hardly any administrative or teaching duties, it is easier to find time for taking part in international conferences and collaboration. In the case of many fellows, international networks already existed before working at IASR, but also in these cases the IASR period is seen crucial because of the time it offers for international collaboration.

*So far, my period at IASR has not had a concrete impact on my international research collaboration. My old and newer international partners would exist also without this period. However, some international co-authoring processes originated from my IASR period.*

Fellows appreciate having the opportunity to invite international colleagues to give lectures at IASR. One respondent complements also IASR's flexibility in organizing workspaces for their visiting colleagues. Besides international networks, the IASR group itself is seen as basis for internationalization. International fellows working at IASR feel that their Finnish colleagues form the basis of their international network and also act as links to enable collaboration within the University of Tampere. And, vice versa, the international peers at IASR are the one aspect, that Finnish fellows consider as encouraging internationalization.

The background thinking of IASR encourages researchers to internationalize more at home than to go abroad during their IASR period. However, it was stated that the director of IASR has been very flexible with research exchange plans and the respondents who took this up in this survey, had been able to conduct their research visits as planned.

*I had the first long-term research visit during my IASR period.*

Some fellows see that there could still be room for strengthening the international aspect of the IASR activities. In their opinion, it could happen e.g. through increasing international collaboration in the institutional level with other Institutes of Advanced Studies or by inviting 'real international stars' to take part in the IASR activities. There is also need for more systematic support in applying for international research funding, such as ERC grants. One respondent mentions the idea of introducing also the students of international Professorial Fellows to the IASR members to increase future collaboration.

*Perhaps more intense networking with other research collegiums in Europe and in the rest of the world, e.g. through joint thematic workshops, seminars etc. would give some extra spark for the international activities of IASR.*

It is also appreciated that research fellows have their own budget for internationalization purposes, 3000 euros per year. Opinions on the amount of the budgeted resources for the internationalization vary. For some fellows, the travel budget seems very reasonable:

*The budget was enough to attend two conferences in Europe or one conference further away per year. In addition, I had money to support smaller projects and hire a research assistant for several smaller tasks.*

However, it was also stated, that the budget for travelling is not overwhelming:

*Of course, some researchers are in need of higher budgets, for instance for collection data trips, while those doing quantitative research may need less financial resources. But overall, I would say that it was relatively ok; of course, researchers would benefit if the budget could be increased. Or tailored according to the needs of each researcher.*

The needs for a travel budget vary a lot, and in some cases the budget for internationalization has been too limited. Some fellows have solved the problem of insufficient budget by supplementing their IASR travel budget with funding from other sources, such as research projects or grants.

*The funds were insufficient to cover for both conference travel and fieldwork; in my case the latter focuses on non-Western countries with higher travel costs, so it was difficult to cover the trips that I wanted to make.*

*The Collegium Researcher has an annual budget of 3000 Euros available. It is enough for a 1-1.5 trip to Europe and 1-2 trips to travel abroad to gather data. After that, there will be little money for proof reading and, for example, for the costs of transcribing. If you are very strict with the money, it is enough. If you want to travel beyond Europe, you must resort to external funding. Research mobility abroad is not possible.*

*The resources offered by the collegium were quite limited at the time, but I also had other research funding that enabled mobility during my collegium period.*

### Research Environment and multidisciplinary

There is a slight difference between the answers of the Finnish and the international fellows in relation to the motivation for applying to the institute. For the Finnish ones it is mostly about organizing time for research. The same applies to international fellows, but they also mentioned good impression of IASR as one of their selection criteria:

*I was fascinated by the idea of IASR as a multidisciplinary research community focused on societal issues. It looked like a dream place to be.*

*The Institute was highly evaluated by other colleagues and the researchers' profiles looked suitable for work I planned to do.*

Nearly all (98 %) of the fellows who responded to the survey agree with the statement: "IASR is providing an environment conducive to conducting research" (Figure 1). Almost as often IASR is seen as an institute stimulating scientific thinking (92 %), and it is also widely considered to be multidisciplinary (90 %). The statement, which gets the least support from the respondents, links to interpretations on IASR's reputation. However, no less than 73 percent of the respondents fully or somewhat agree with the statement: "IASR is well-known in its field".

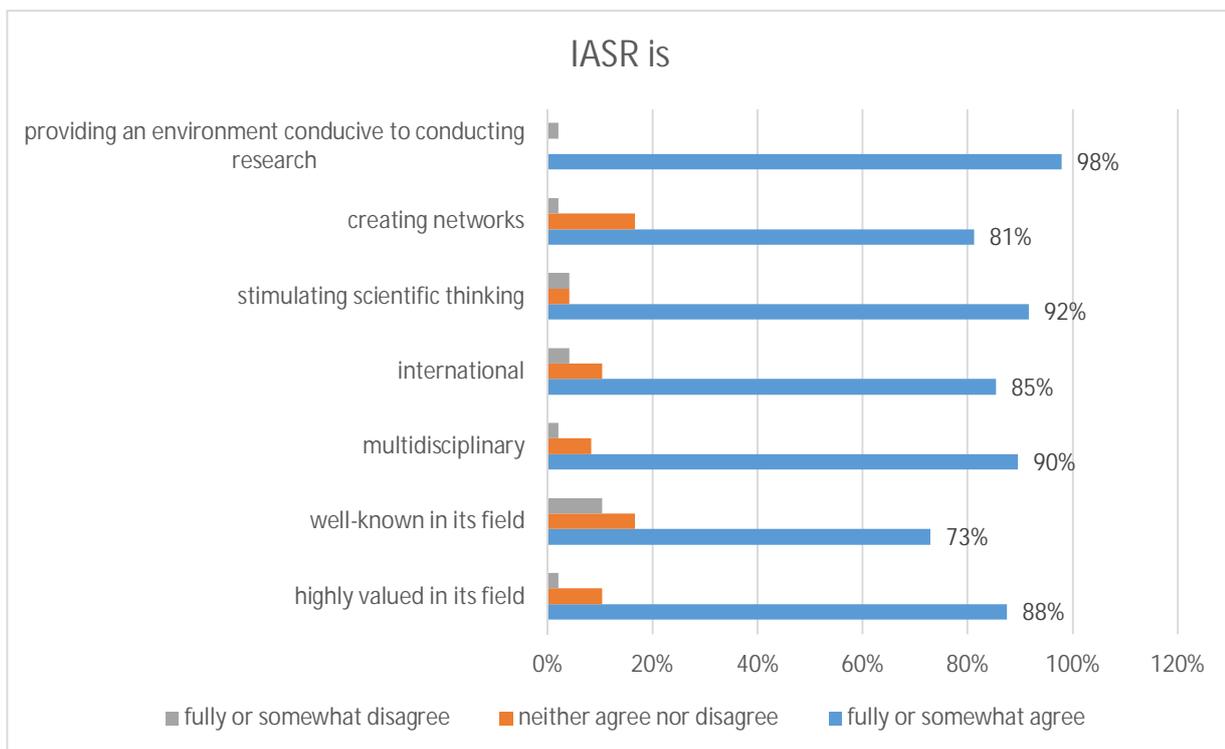


Figure 1. How well do you find the following statements to apply to IASR? (n=48)

In general, fellows are happy with the level of weekly activities: internal article seminars and public lecture series. Also the Winter Seminar taking place abroad and informal Tuesday lunches are seen important in enabling collaboration and networking among fellows.

When describing the research environment more freely, informants stress the meaning of the multidisciplinary nature of IASR. It seems that IASR has offered fellows a possibility to widen and deepen the knowledge and perspective of their research approach: researchers expose themselves

to new perspectives and methodologies as well as multidisciplinary thinking. Fellows learn to comment research papers that are not from their own field. Some bring up the possibilities to have theoretical discussions as a positive feature. A technologically oriented researcher feels that as an applied science oriented researcher they have benefitted from the theory and the basic science oriented approach of social sciences. In addition, the researcher feels they have been able to develop research approaches that go beyond the limits of their original discipline. Multidisciplinary nature of IASR has also diversified job opportunities of the fellows. For instance, one fellow writes about the developing of an application and finding a new position after IASR, within a framework that was not in their original discipline.

Still, some challenges are reported in relation to the multidisciplinary nature of IASR. In general, joint discussions are found interesting, but some of the fellows have experienced the support with the substance of their research insufficient. Some wished for more thematic coherence.

*It would be much more productive if there were thematic coherence among the scholars hired for the two years. In that case, joint activities would offer a better context for intellectual advancement.*

At the same time as researchers see the possibilities of a multidisciplinary research environment for their thinking, they recognize the need for support coming from colleagues in their own field. Collaboration with disciplines near the researcher's own field is considered useful, and the boundaries of interdisciplinarity are also set:

*At least there is no need to increase the multidisciplinary, such as introduction of technology and medicine into the same functions.*

A respondent from the medical field reflects the same challenge from the other side:

*I am from the medical sciences and the collegium could not offer me proper support.*

Above, we have analyzed all three fellow categories mainly as one group. Overall, the experiences of working at IASR are very similar between the three categories. There are still a few exceptions. First, experiences of IASR period's effects on career for Senior Fellows and Postdoctoral Fellows are different from the Professorial Fellows' experiences. For younger researchers the collegium has served as basis for career development.

*I'd say that my current research trajectory was by and large conceived during my stay at IASR.*

*After working at IASR, I have received a permanent professorship and at the moment I am leading an Academy of Finland funded project.*

Second, the IASR history with having breaks in recruiting professors and recruiting them via Foundations' Professor Pool reflects to the survey results. To build a stronger research community, fellows call for more funding and posts available in each category. However, there is a special concern on the decreased amount of Professorial Fellows. Professorial Fellows report also on their disappointment with their peers not showing up for joint activities.

Third, the fact that IASR period is shorter for Professorial Fellows than for others is problematic at least in two ways. One-year period is considered too short a period to create new projects. Moreover, all the Finnish Professorial Fellows report difficulties in disengaging themselves from their previous

duties. This applies also to the research fellows in the other two categories, but in light of the survey results, it is obvious that the administration, teaching and supervising duties, likewise different kinds of tasks in relation to university level processes have followed especially the Professorial Fellows to IASR:

*I was still somewhat bound to planning and implementing teaching, because there was not a substitute to take over all of my duties.*

*There were organizational changes going on at the university at that time, and based on my actual post, my participation in several meetings was a necessity.*

Time spent at the collegium offers possibilities to concentrate on publishing, new research openings and writing research applications. However, much of the benefits that derive from working at IASR are indirect effects. Fellows learn a lot from each other. One fellow puts the broader meaning of IASR colleagues nicely:

*It may happen also for talented researchers that you feel a bit lost with your work.*

These kind of learning experiences are reported as being relieving. Also words like collegial, supporting and inspiring were linked to the encouraging atmosphere of the institute. These adjectives might be used just as fillers, but in the case of IASR, it seems that these attributes describing the atmosphere are relevant for the research motivation of fellows. First, to be selected into this exclusive research team have resonated to the self-confidence of the researchers and thus gives motivation to strive for high quality research. However, in the light of the survey, it seems that there could be room for giving systematic feedback on the application process: almost one third of the respondents found the feedback on the application process and its outcome insufficient. Second, working with colleagues who are able to concentrate on research is considered rewarding.

*I think that the most important role of the college is indirect, it has developed my thinking and views on conducting research and what it is to be a researcher, and hence made possible the development of my future career.*