

University of Cambridge  
**PdOC Society and the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs**  
**Departmental Postdoc Committee Chairs Network**

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Minutes of the meeting in the Postdoc Centre @ 16 Mill Lane  
12:45 Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2019

**Attendees**

Name	Department	Email
A Hay	PDN	ah831@cam.ac.uk
Giorgia Busso	Astronomy	giorgia@ast.cam.ac.uk
Mark Ainslie	Engineering	mark.ainslie@eng.cam.ac.uk
Katharina Greve	IfM	kg403@cam.ac.uk
Matt Danish	Computer Labs	Mrd45@cam.ac.uk
Harriet Lyon	History	Hkl30@cam.ac.uk
J A	Zoology	
Tina Schreier	Plant Sciences	Tbs32@cam.ac.uk
Joanna Waldie	Physics	Jw353@cam.ac.uk
Paul Bennett	Physics	wpb22@cam.ac.uk
Sung Sam Gong	Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Ssg29@medschl.cam.ac.uk
Y Calahorra	Materials Science and Metallurgy	yc402@cam.ac.uk
Jeongmin Choi	Plant Sciences	jc913@cam.ac.uk
Karina Prasad	OPdA	Karina.Prasad@admin.cam.ac.uk
Tariq Masood	Engineering	tm487@cam.ac.uk
Jacek Mokrosinski	Clinical Biochemistry	jm972@medschl.cam.ac.uk
James Brown	OPdA	James.Brown@admin.cam.ac.uk
Hollie Godden	OPdA	hg379@cam.ac.uk

## 1. **Welcome and Introduction – Dr Tariq Masood, Chair, DPCCN**

Tariq Masood welcomed attendees to the Departmental Postdoc Committees Chairs Network meeting explaining the meeting themes are Research Excellence & Recognition and Strategic Career Plan & Progression. – *slide 1,2,3,4,5*

The chair notified the network of recent updates; – *slide 6,7,8*

- Minutes and slides from the last meeting are available [online](#).
- Jacek and Josh Kaggie (PdOC) worked on the Concordat consultation response on behalf of PdOC and DPCCN. This was submitted at the end of 2019.
- A Concordat Writing Group has been established and Tariq is a member. The group aim to have a first draft by end of April. There is no date set for a final version to be shared publicly yet.
- Katharina Greve, a Postdoctoral Researcher in the Institute for Manufacturing, was introduced to the group as a candidate for Vice Chair of DPCCN. The attending members had no objections therefore she was approved to fill one of the Vice-Chair positions.
- New network members were introduced; Harriet Lyon and Charu Singh from Faculty of History, newly formed committee. Giorgia Busso is a new co-chair for Institute of Astronomy. Tina Schreier will be taking over as new chair for Plant Sciences.

## 2. **Updates on postdoc matters - Dr James Brown, Assistant Head of Office, Strategy, OPdA- slide 10**

### a) **Researcher Development Pitch and funding**

The Researcher Development Pitch Competition final pitching event took place, OPdA in process of contacting groups involved formally. A guide to organising RD activities with contact details for accessing School level funding will be published online and circulated to DPCCN. Please let [hollie.godden@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:hollie.godden@admin.cam.ac.uk) know if you have any difficulties finding funding or organising an RD event.

### b) **Concordat consultation submission**

The University submitted an institutional response having been produced by a variety of individuals from University departments and services, including a postdoc representative. The Concordat review has generated a lot of awareness and positive discussion so regardless of the outcome, we need to think about how to embed that positive discussion outside of the Concordat.

### c) **Networking lunch in Student Services new building**

Postdoc Careers Service and Researcher Development Programme will be moving at the end of March to their new facilities in the Student Services Building. An informal lunch will be organised for members of DPCCN to visit them at their new location.

### d) **Staff Survey**

The University has launched its first University wide staff survey. Please encourage all colleagues to complete the survey. There are questions specific to postdocs and this will help evidence specific problems that postdocs and research staff face.

### e) **Public Engagement Advisory Group**

The Public Engagement Advisory Group provide strategic academic oversight of public engagement at the University. They would now like to open the group to include postdocs, one representative from each School. If you or a colleague is interested, please email [hollie.godden@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:hollie.godden@admin.cam.ac.uk)

**3. Promotion and Progression – Dr Jacek Mokrosinski, Vice-Chair DPCCN, Dr James Brown and Dr Tariq Masood slide 12 to 28**

JB and KP explain that input has already been made into the Academic Pathways review. Karina sits on the HR committee and emphasises that criteria is included which requires evidence that researchers have been treated well during their time with the PI. This shows encouragement that researcher development is being looked at seriously.

Researcher Promotions are to be reviewed. Feedback from the network, with specific examples or cases from departments will help create a background of what is happening in departments, the clarity of information and accessibility. It is also important to know if information is not found or does not exist.

The group discussed funding and promotions quoting from the university [Research Pages](#). Jacek reported that Clinical Schools have a centralized system which includes funding as one of the criteria. The question of grants being costed to include promotion or not is raised, some institutions underwrite promotions regardless of the grant.

**Action: Through R14, ask if institutions underwrite promotions.**

Criteria for promotions is not consistent across departments and Schools meaning some departments have vague criteria. Understanding the criteria will be the first step to understanding the situation across the University. JW (Physics) reports that the department has set its own criteria. It is also reported that departments do not have a committee to specially look into researcher promotions which does currently happen for academic promotions. Researcher promotion have to go through the PI, who then puts the researcher forward. **Action: Network members find out current criteria for promotion on own department and report back.**

Katharina (IfM) reports to the group about arrangements in own department and the importance of keeping a record, recognition and how that fits with the criteria of promotion.

**Action: Katharina send Hollie information.**

Questions were raised over the volume of applications and if a number is known.

**Action: OPdA obtain data on how many applications are made.**

KP highlights to the group that the university does not have enough academic roles to promote all postdocs and that academia is not for everyone. The posts that are available become very competitive and funds are limited. JB also explains that part of the researcher interaction criteria creates a much wider scope for a researchers CV and could take the researcher down a different path. KP emphasises the importance of making the best of opportunities, particularly with the University brand, from the day you begin your postdoc in Cambridge.

PB (Physics) asks if information about promotions is included in inductions which Karina confirms it is not but OPdA are currently looking at creating a second follow up induction

which would then be a good place to inform on promotions possibly being available but not to be relied on as a career path.

#### 4. Break

#### 5. Postdoc Awards – Dr Tariq Masood and Karina Prasad, Head of OPdA – slides 31 to 47

TM explains to the group how university award schemes are in place for a number of staff groups and departments, but there are no award schemes which are specifically for, or include, postdocs. A list of awards can be found in the [Reporter](#). Examples of current schemes include:

- VC Awards
- Pilkington Teaching Awards
- Professional Services Recognition Scheme
- Student Awards
- Departmental Awards and Prizes

KP explains that industry partners could help support postdoc prizes through OPdA by raising small sums of money and this would be very doable. A previous idea was to give out a PI prize, having PI's competing against each other to be nominated by postdocs, the end achievement would be postdocs being treated better by their PI. It is raised that Materials Science have a prize of approximately £2.5K, KP highlights receiving an award from University of Cambridge is the important part for postdocs, rather than funds received.

The group are asked to think about and discuss postdocs being included in current award schemes or having an award schemes created specifically for postdocs. Feedback and ideas received from the network;

- Prize for postdocs with caring responsibility, recognise research excellence through balancing caring and giving funds for childcare while travelling etc. Recognition for productive postdoc peer reviewer.
- Research excellence, one prize per school with university wide ceremony, every year or every two years. Nominations by PI, collaborators and HoD or Dept HR, plus anyone thinking it is deserved.
- OPdA seed funding departmental prizes, judged locally. Categories, Research area, outreach, industrial (external impact), teaching and supervision, service outside profession. Departmental nomination, judging panel non-research staff (one from each group) and research (technical panel).
- Unsung hero award for postdocs; Aim to raise awareness of postdoc in middle (or not listed) of author list on papers. Process, nominated by fellow postdocs. Motivation, the first co-authors are already getting the spotlight and they might have more chance for 'promotion'.
- Categories, best PhD/MSc supervisor, public engagement (best communication), EDI champion, best innovator / entrepreneur, best research with impact, postdoc committee prize.
- Team or individual awards with suggested categories; Academic Citizenship (external to research, 'volunteer' activities) e.g postdoc committees, organising workshops/networking, with impact. Equality and Diversity champion(s), separate award. Independence (leading research) and leadership. Impact, research has had

significant impact outside of academia. Outreach, public engagement. Teaching, designing course (innovation) and impact of teaching (excellent feedback).

- Nominations through PI e.g self-nomination with references from HoD and PI.
- Categories, best supervisor/mentor, best public engagement, most impact, best team work.
- Roles of postdocs in different disciplines and departments are very different, need for department specific – shaped by postdoc committees?
- Special need for awards that recognise work postdocs do for which they get no other recognition. For example lab management and mentoring PhD students.

TM concludes by encouraging the network to create recognition letters to those who are leaving departmental committees. Templates can be obtained through HG.

#### 6. **Open Session** – slide 48

Network members are to raise any points of concern and initiatives happening within their committee.

- JW and PB co-chair Physics postdoc committee – JW has organised a Q&A with HoD which anyone can attend, turning the session into a series with the committee choosing the topic. A chance to talk about relevant matters, directly to senior leadership. Both HoD and departmental admin attend and is a way to break down barriers between postdocs and senior leadership and other staff groups.
- KG from IfM postdoc committee – reports similar activity to Physics, they have encourages sign-ups to know how many people are attending and pre-meetings with HoD to propose questions to be prepared. Initiatives that have come up include advertising event through RD. In the process of establishing ‘research marketplace’ for researchers who are available and PI’s who need extra help with projects creating opportunities. These are ideas that come through termly meetings.
- JM chair at MRL – An informal career event was held, inviting people from private networks, alumni and personal contacts. Five people talked about life after postdoc with 15 attendees, the format worked well. Regarding awards, MRC and Wellcome come together with funding earmarked for awards, annually £10K. Only two projects applied last time and the next one is just being launched, hopeful for more applicants. Currently fighting for postdocs to be on the panel as it will be a researcher development opportunity for those who are.

#### 7. **AOB and Next Meeting, Tariq** – slide 49

Next meeting date to be circulated, planned for May 2019.

Themes will be continuing with recognition and also include contracts.

Suggestions from network members to look at visas and invite Graeme Ross.