

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

Minutes of the meeting in the Student Services Centre, Bene't St, Cambridge CB2 3PT
 12:00 Wednesday 4th December 2019

Attendees

Name	Department	Email
Sung Gong	SPROG	Ssg29@medschl.cam.ac.uk
Clare Worley	Astronomy	ccworley@ast.cam.ac.uk
Chrysoula Litina	Engineering	Cl519@cam.ac.uk
Katharina Greve	IfM	kg403@cam.ac.uk
Matt Danish	Computer Labs	Mrd45@cam.ac.uk
Vicky Sleight	Zoology	zoo-postdocs-committee @ lists.cam.ac.uk
Tina Schreier	Plant Sciences	Tbs32@cam.ac.uk
Yonatan Calahorra	Materials Science and Metallurgy	yc402@cam.ac.uk
Bénédicte Sanson	PDN	bs251@cam.ac.uk
Tom Bloom	Maths	tb634@cam.ac.uk
Marco Ladd	Music	Mal55@cam.ac.uk
Sankari Nagarajan	CRUK CI	Sankari.Nagarajan@cruk.cam.ac.uk
Carmen Ting	McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research	Ct589@cam.ac.uk
Josh Kaggie	Radiology	Jk636@cam.ac.uk
Karina Prasad	OPdA	Karina.Prasad@admin.cam.ac.uk
Jacek Mokrosinski	Clinical Biochemistry	jm972@medschl.cam.ac.uk
Liz Simmonds	OPdA	Liz.Simmonds@admin.cam.ac.uk
Hollie Godden	OPdA	hg379@cam.ac.uk

1. Welcome and Introduction – Dr Jacek Mokrosinski and Dr Katharina Greve (vice-chairs)

JM welcomes attendees to the Michaelmas Term 2019 Postdoc Chairs' Network meeting, explaining the network consists of representative from departmental postdoc committees, formed through a joint initiative between OPdA and PdOC. The network adds to the existing landscape of support for postdocs in the University, meeting termly to discuss various topics grouped around the fourteen identified needs. It is explained that the current needs have been mapped onto the newly revised Concordat principles. KP asks that needs which have already been addressed are acknowledged on the mapped diagram.

Action: adjust mapping diagram to reflect KP's comments.

The network are notified that Tariq Masood has stepped down from his role as Chair of the network. Thanks is given to his hard work over the last five years. The network is now looking for a new Chair who, with support from JM and KG, will enthuse and engage members to help develop the network further. To know more about this opportunity, contact JM, KG, LS or HG.

2. PCN Updates - Dr Jacek Mokrosinski and Dr Katharina Greve

KG explains a Five Year Report was written reflecting on activities, changes and initiatives to take forward. Case studies submitted by PCN representatives were included, along with photos, and made available to all those attending the Postdoc Groups' Celebration which included the Vice-Chancellor. The report is now available online and has been circulated by email.

Action: HG post hard copy of reports.

The new name 'Postdoc Chairs' Network [PCN]' is acknowledged. A new twitter account has been set-up and is being updated by KG @PCN_Cambridge. Updated webpages for the network can be found at <https://www.pdoc.cam.ac.uk/pcn>. It is currently being explored if the network can have it's own University domain, creating a new contact email address and website.

Action: HG update when request with UIS is resolved.

JM explains the links between PdOC and PCN. JM is a PdOC committee member, bringing topics discussed at committee meetings back to the network, and vice versa. PdOC have representation at University level, sitting on various central committees. Josh Kaggie (PdOC President) is in attendance and is introduced to the network.

The network is informed of the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. The University is preparing to sign the new Concordat, which is being coordinated and managed by OPdA through the Concordat Working Group. LS explains the group are currently thinking of ways to communicate the Concordat and will be completing a gap analysis for actions to move forward.

3. OPdA Updates – Liz Simmonds, Assistant Head

LS informs the network of a postdoc alumni survey which has been created by OPdA, to be sent out to ~5000 alumni in the new year. The survey needs some test work so all are asked to email contact details of postdoc alumni who may be able to help.

Action: All email LS with contacts for test survey.

4. IfM awards scheme update – Dr Katharina Greve - slide

The Postdoc Awards pilot scheme, run by IfM, received 28 nominations. Feedback from nominators has been collected with overall positive results and comments, including all being satisfied/very satisfied with the nomination process. Some improvements to the scheme were suggested which included using better defined categories and making students and staff from other divisions/departments eligible to nominate an IfM Postdoc. Thanks is given to Prof Tim Minshall for supporting and providing resources for the scheme.

5. University Staff Survey Results

LS welcomes Vivienne Lee-Martinez as Strategy Programme Manager in HR Division and Deputy Chair of the Staff Survey Team. Over the summer, LS and Vivienne worked together to collate the postdoc data with benchmark data. Postdoc data was pulled from results of those who stated they were a Researcher on Grade 7-9.

Background information on the survey is explained;

- Run in March 2019 by ORC
- 72% engagement score – mutually beneficial relationship between employee & employer; leads to retention & discretionary effort
- Staff survey operations team
- Action planning at University, school and department level
- Additional focus groups with grades 1-3 (low response)
- Automated exit interviews for all
- In-depth analysis of qualitative results by an academic colleague

There was an overall 70% response rate, however it is estimated that the postdoc response was much lower at approximately 40%. How to engage the current postdoc community, taking responsibility to support change for the postdocs and colleagues that will follow them, is raised as something to think about.

From the postdoc data, the top 5 positive, negative and neutral results are displayed with '*I am proud to work for the University of Cambridge*' scoring highly at 90%. LS and Vivienne explain questions relating to pride of the employer and sense of belonging are normally around 50%. '*I believe that the work the University does is world class*' also scored highly at 88%.

KP acknowledges that '*I have received structured mentoring in relation to my career development*' is showing in the top negative responses at 72%, and explains that the OPdA mentoring scheme is not clear in departments. OPdA will in the new year launch a campaign for the scheme.

Schools and Departments are working on individual action plans.

Jana Bacevic, also a member of the Staff Survey Team, is introduced. Jana explains she is analysing narrative data from two open questions, the first received 4000 responses and 2000 for the second. She is also looking at correlations and patterns in responses. Where the University is seen as a formal employer, the results correlate with impressions and expressions showing tension between concepts; the University seen as a formal employer and the University seen as a community. This is important in understanding how people react to developments, being unhappy if perceived as formal procedures. LS thinking about this in communication of the new Concordat. An employees length of service correlates with increased dissatisfaction.

A University wide action is to introduce a new exit interview system for everyone, a pilot scheme for this is being run in December 2019. The idea of this to be more consistent across the University so this could replace current local arrangements for exit interviews.

It is noted that the Staff Review and Development rate for postdocs is much higher than the overall University rate. An open discussion takes place about how to measure good conversation, not just filling in paperwork as 'tick-box' exercises and that it is good to see an improvement but not in a procedural way. This element links back into recognition. Everyone taking responsibility for SRD's is reiterated and how this could be a 'must' category when implementing the new Concordat.

Action planning: The network are asked to work in groups, the following feedback and comments were received.

Celebrate – What do we do well?

- We have pride in the university. Postdocs are very flexible - generally. The university tries to engage with postdocs through multiple committees.
- We have access to better research-specific resources than most other universities.
- Access to information where to get help is really good.
- Access to services (e.g. mentoring); OPdA calendar including different training opportunities; Tracking of training activities online; University engagement with postdocs; Career service (dedicated to postdocs: academia/industry); work flexibility
- This university is better for postdocs for resources than any other universities we had been to.
- Leadership initiatives (on a good track); College affiliation (is becoming more accessible for Postdocs - still room for improvement); Eddington (housing)

Investigate further – what do we want to know more about?

- Certain departments have different needs than other depts which had not been covered in the survey. Example: Postdocs without line managers or research groups
- Career progression (promotion system; using all grades (not from 5 to 7 but using 6, 8 etc. too)); more clarity about the promotion criteria; reflect on industry promotion system (increasing response. over time}
- Why do most people experience or witness bullying, harassment, or sexual misconduct? How can improve this? Why do these results contradict with "I am treated with fairness and respect"? Note: LS explains the results appear to show a high number have witnessed this however, the positive response reported on are those who said they have not.

- We need more information about whether appraisal usefulness.
- Maternity/Paternity challenges (due to short term contract nature)
- Less awareness towards promotions, mentoring schemes, etc.
- How does this data divide more finely between different types of postdoc-i.e. university post docs, JRFs, visiting researchers etc.?
- What concerns do postdocs who have done PhDs here have?
- How are the promotions processes seen as unfair? E.g. lack of transparency, inconsistency, interference from department politics?
- Engaging or securing participation in departments with very small postdoc communities

Opportunities – areas to focus on and turn into action?

- Engagement between different postdoc groups, JRFs, visiting scientists
- Engaging or securing participation from departments with very small postdoc communities
- Maternity /Paternity policies: Simply the process for people in the position. More clarity about the process and make information accessible (before people are in the situation, so that they can take an informed decision); Having impartial advice.
- Make promotion process transparent. Encourage new evidences to prove that research funding has been contributed to by a postdoc (who may be excluded from being called a PI or CI)
- Raise awareness of mentoring and how it works/what the benefits are, especially of mentorship from mentors in a different academic field (in small departments may not be pursued because they're not aware of cross-department opportunities)
- Oxford pays Visa costs, why don't we?
- Expansion of returning carer scheme

Further discussion takes place around culture change with the refreshed Concordat and how all parties are responsible. JM also highlights the anonymous survey being distributed at RD sessions, asking if PI's know if the postdoc is attending and if they have used annual leave to attend. Data will help show that change is needed.

6. Open discussion – slide 23

Tom is a new member attending from Maths, asking how to set-up a new committee. KP explains OPdA previously have visited departments to talk to postdocs, administrators and academics and also suggests finding a 'buddy' in the room to help each other across own committees, and/or find an admin or academic partner in the department. This could help with funding, KP offered to write a letter to HoD if needed. JM explains a guide to setting up a postdoc committee is available on the PdOC website but also get in contact if help is needed. <https://www.pdoc.cam.ac.uk/pcn/PCNResources>. Questions move to funding for committees, it is explained that any funds obtained will be from a dept level.

Action: Email HG, LS, JM or KG if needing help or letter to HoD.

Vicky from Dept of Zoology asks where postdocs should go with issues or problems that cannot be resolved in the department or with the postdoc committee. It is advised to

contact either OPdA, PdOC or PCN for help and support. All are encouraged to share where problems arise so, where appropriate, they can be added to the agenda for discussion.

7. AOB and Next Meeting – slide 27

The Lent Term PCN meeting has been scheduled for the 5th of March 2020 and will focus on teaching. KP has had initial discussions and would like to use the network as a way to gather information on postdoc needs for teaching. Professor Geoff Ward, President of Homerton College, has confirmed his attendance.

The Easter Term meeting will take place on the 18th June 2020 and Professor David Cardwell is very interested in attending. The topic and agenda will be thought about carefully to make the meeting as useful as possible to the network.

One of the future meeting will also be focussed on Equality and Diversity. More information to follow.