

# Postdocs of Cambridge Society Annual Report 2026

## Background

Postdocs Of Cambridge (PdOC) are the University of Cambridge Society for postdocs and early career researchers. The society is registered as a senior staff society with Council. PdOC represents postdocs in University discussions, career development, contract research conditions, college affiliation, social and sporting issues, as well as entrepreneurship events and communications.

PdOC is governed by a management committee, currently consisting of 13 postdocs, who meet monthly to discuss society business, plan future activities and to discuss and act on community-wide postdoc issues. PdOC holds staple annual events bringing postdocs together with senior University leaders.

The Cambridge postdoc community currently consists of approximately 4000 postdocs (Research Associates, Senior Research Associates, Junior Research Fellows and other titles). This is a diverse and international group of people which delivers the bulk of the University's research output. PdOC strive to be as inclusive as possible, meeting the needs of the community.

## Membership

The Society is open to all postdocs associated or affiliated with the University of Cambridge, its Colleges and University Partner Institutes. There is no membership fee to join and members are recorded in the form of a mailing list.

## Aims of the Society

The aims of the PdOC society are to:

- Represent Postdocs from all Faculties, Schools and Departments at the University of Cambridge and University Partner Institutions.
- Facilitate communication and networking between Postdocs both within the Departments and across Faculties and the wider University community.
- Provide information and support so that Postdocs can make the most of their time at Cambridge.
- Create a social and intellectual network for Postdocs throughout the University.

## 2025/2026 Committee Members

(Acting-) President	Nino Läubli
Vice President	Vacant
Treasurer	Roberta Palmulli
Secretary	Lena Quambusch
Social and Networking Events Officers	Elsa Amsellem Manuel Iburg
Communications Officer	Fabio Pino
College Affiliations Officer	Nicholas Williams
Researcher Development Officers	Alvaro Lopez-Acosta Marie Spreckley
Departmental Officer	Soujanya Mantravadi
Welfare, Equality and Diversity Officers	Markus Hellenbrand María Lopez-Cavestany
Entrepreneurial Officer	Rajbir Batra
Marketing and Social Media Officer	Amir Rahmani
Senior Treasurer	Nicky Blanning

## Activities of the 2025/2026 Committee

### President

As Acting-President and formerly Vice-President of PdOC, having taken over from Yoon Hee, who served as President until March 2026, I have had the privilege of liaising with various senior members of the University and participating in multiple representative groups. Throughout the year, we have worked to connect with Cambridge's large early career community and to ensure that postdoctoral perspectives are effectively communicated.

Among the most pressing activities in this area was my involvement in the Fixed-Term Contract Working Group and the Staff Review and Development Advisory Group. In these roles, I aimed to represent the diverse views of the postdoctoral community and to share feedback from its members, ensuring their perspectives were heard and considered. However, during our terms, we also frequently provided informal one-to-one guidance to postdocs, with the interactions covering numerous topics ranging from salary discussions and visa advice to family support and college applications. Beyond local interactions, many enabled through the Society's frequent social activities or the Postdoc Academy's Welcome Events, we strove to strengthen PdOC's national and international network by connecting to other postdoc-centric institutions to share insights and best practices on how to improve support for postdoctoral communities.

Continuing on last year's informal meeting with the Director of HR, the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Community, and the Head of the Postdoc Academy, during which we raised a number of recurring concerns from postdocs, we expanded our engagement with different stakeholders, including the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and the Immigration & Compliance Manager, to emphasise requests made by the community and to clarify regulations on their behalf. These representative interactions were further supported through our participation in the University's celebratory activities, like the installation of the new Chancellor, which we used as an opportunity to highlight challenges and uncertainties faced by early-career researchers in direct discussions with both Heads of Houses and Departments as well as university leadership representatives.

Nevertheless, it is relevant to admit that certain advances have been met with substantial resistance and, accordingly, progressed more slowly than anticipated. For example, the distribution of our wellbeing survey announced in last year's report has been blocked by various institutions and has only recently been able to regain momentum thanks to the active support from the Postdoc Academy's Deputy Head, thus highlighting the importance of long-term persistence and alignment of the Society's management direction across years to ensure the fruitful implementation of relevant initiatives.

Looking ahead, I hope that PdOC will continue to liaise with both academic and entrepreneurial groups across Cambridge's ecosystem to strengthen the Society's links for the benefit of its community, thereby ensuring not only the continuation of its representative tasks but also the delivery of its successful large-scale events such as the annual Research Showcase or its Garden Party, alongside the various smaller networking opportunities offered by the numerous pub nights and quizzes, College brunches, or other researcher development or wellbeing activities.

## Treasurer

The Society's finances remained positive throughout the whole year. The Society is non-profit and does not rely on a regular income, but it relies on contributions made by internal or external sponsors, as well as payments requested for participation to specific events. This year the Committee was able to secure the support of several sponsors in relation to the Research Showcase 2025. This budget allowed to fully cover the costs of the event, as well as to save part of the funds that will be used to organise the Research Showcase in 2026. Moreover, thanks to a donation received by PdA in 2024, PdOC has been able to subsidise the cost of some social activities, namely the Winter Dinner 2025 and the Garden Party 2026.

On 20/06/2026, the final balance is £8,132.07, with the Society having made a net positive of £1,003.25.

Here is a summary of the financial report for the year:

### Overview

<b>Accounts</b>	<b>Balance</b>
<b>Barclays</b>	£ 8,100.91
<b>PayPal</b>	£ 0
<b>Petty Cash</b>	£ 1.16
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 8,132.07</b>

<b>Unpaid invoices and expenses</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Garden Party 2026	TBD
<b>Awaiting payment</b>	<b>Amount</b>
////////	£ 0.00
<b>Total unpaid</b>	<b>TBD</b>
<b>Total uncashed</b>	<b>£ 0.00</b>

### Summary of transactions

<b>In</b>	£ 4,693.00
<b>Out</b>	-£ 3,689.75
<b>Balance</b>	<b>£ 1,003.25</b>

## Secretary

In my role as Society Secretary, I have helped to organise our monthly meetings, for that I compiled the agenda and collected all the officer reports. I took care in writing the minutes of every meeting and circulating documents as needed, as well as uploading the materials on to our google drive. Further I helped the PdOC communications Subcommittee to distribute our weekly newsletter.

## Social and Networking Events

As the 2025-2026 Social and Networking Events Officer, joined in March 2026 by co-officer, Manuel Iburg, we organised a variety of events throughout the year. These included 14 regular or themed pub nights (such as quiz nights, Halloween screening, and Eurovision night), and the Christmas dinner. I also collaborated with the PdA for a quiz night at the Post-doc center in Eddington.

To ensure inclusivity, we varied the locations across Cambridge and scheduled events on different days of the week, giving everyone a chance to attend. On average, around 25 people joined each event, with approximately 50 attending the Christmas dinner. I am currently organising the annual Garden Party (expected attendance 100) and the AGM (expected attendance 50) and we are organising two additional pub nights this month.

At each pub night, we welcomed newcomers by adding them to our unofficial WhatsApp group, where members propose informal meetups such as cinema outings, game nights, May balls, or sports activities. The group remains quite active and has helped foster strong and lasting bonds among postdocs.

Thanks to these social events, our postdoc community has grown larger and stronger, and most importantly, many meaningful friendships have been formed!

## Communications

Since March, I have served as the PdOC Communications Officer, coordinating the distribution of the weekly PdOC newsletter to Society members in collaboration with the Postdoctoral Academy (PdA), following the agreed-upon rota system. In addition to managing the distribution schedule, I take full responsibility for preparing and circulating the newsletter when PdA support is unavailable.

I work closely with other members of the committee, including the Social Events Officers, Entrepreneurship Officer, and Welfare & EDI Officers, to ensure that relevant and useful information reaches the postdoctoral community across Cambridge. I also coordinate with internal partners such as NVS, Careers Service, and Cambridge Enterprise to promote key events and opportunities, while actively encouraging external partners to use the newsletter to reach postdocs.

The newsletter continues to be well received by the postdoctoral community, with an average of approximately 200 views per weekly edition. Engagement metrics indicate that readers spend about 2 minutes per newsletter and, on average, read 50% of its content.

No major challenges have been faced in this role so far.

## College Affiliations

The role of the College Affiliation Officer is broadly to help promote and manage the relationship between postdocs and colleges, whether it be raising awareness of college affiliations for postdocs, or encouraging colleges to enhance their offerings for postdocs. Having been in post since February 2026, I have continued to organise the popular brunch series for postdocs at various colleges. These have continued to be very well attended, with brunch at Sidney Sussex attended by about 50 people! Aside from this brunch, we hosted brunches at Peterhouse, Homerton, and Clare. I am in the process of organising a data-gathering exercise to update our information on what college affiliations are currently on offer, how many postdocs are affiliated with each college, what benefits are available from each college, and so on. I hope that this will result in a report that can be shared with postdocs around the university to increase awareness of the different offers from each college. I am pleased to report that no major challenges have been faced during my tenure so far, and I look forward to continuing these initiatives next year.

## Welfare, Equality and Diversity

My primary role as the Wellbeing and ED&I (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) Officer is to share relevant information with postdocs across the Cambridge community on issues related to wellbeing and inclusion, and to help build a welcoming and supportive environment for all. Primarily, I have represented PdOC at University-level ED&I Committee meetings, ensuring that postdoc voices are included in broader institutional discussions. I also joined the UK Visa Researchers Network to help advocate for funds from UKRI to cover visa expenses for postdocs. Additionally, I participated actively in the university Staff Review and Development consultation. I have continued to maintain and update the Wellbeing and ED&I resource guide on the PdOC website. I organized several walks around Cambridge aimed at creating a relaxed, social space to discuss wellbeing topics.

On the Wellbeing side of the role, the main focus was the pursuit of a university-wide postdoc wellbeing survey. To approve collection of demographic data for the survey, for example to analyse whether certain experiences differ with demographics, an ethics application was submitted to the School of Physical Sciences ethics committee. They requested some further information before reviewing the application, one piece of which was the support from the Postdoc Academy. Due to various reasons, it took the majority of the year to gather all requested information, but the ethics application is now resubmitted and awaiting review. If and when approved, the practical steps for filling out the survey will be organised.

## Marketing and Social Media

Following my appointment to the committee in May 2026, communications efforts focused on restoring the digital presence of the Postdocs of Cambridge (PdOC) Society by delivering consistent content for events and announcements. Since implementing this new content strategy, both primary social media channels have experienced growth in audience reach and engagement. On Instagram, optimisation efforts resulted in a 4.5k increase in views over the past month and 6 new followers, with the latest post successfully expanding our organic outreach by drawing 35% of its viewership from non-followers. Concurrently, LinkedIn performance surged dramatically. The platform achieved 1,670 total impressions, representing a massive 2,992.6% increase. The immediate spike in metrics demonstrates the clear impact of dedicated communications management over the last two months. Moving forward, the focus will remain on sustaining this momentum and converting this enhanced digital visibility into higher event attendance and deeper community engagement.

# Researcher Development

## Overview

The flagship initiative was the Research Pathways Symposium, delivered as a two-part event under the theme Innovate, Connect, Advance to support researchers through interdisciplinary exchange, practical training, and career development. Alongside this, Research Cyber Cafés and development workshops were organised to strengthen the research community and provide targeted support.

### Research Pathways Symposium

The Research Pathways Symposium was the main event of the year and was deliberately split into two parts to balance research innovation and career development. The format worked extremely well, with a programme that combined postdoctoral talks, practical workshops, panel discussion, external speakers, and structured networking. Importantly, the event was designed as an active, engaging experience rather than a passive sequence of talks, and this was one of its greatest strengths.

### Day 1: Research Innovation Showcase

The first day, Research Innovation Showcase – PdOC Soc, took place on Monday, 10 November 2025 under the theme Discover Tomorrow's Research Today. Led by PdOC, it highlighted interdisciplinary excellence and the transformative role of AI in research, including its value for productivity, accuracy, efficiency, and responsible use. Attendance increased by around 300 compared with previous years, supported by enhanced prizes and a stronger programme offer. The day included keynote talks, workshops, a panel on responsible AI, research showcases, a poster competition, and networking with food and drinks.

A particular strength of the event was the wider activity around the scientific content. Professional LinkedIn photo sessions for postdocs and one-minute podcast and video summaries added visible value for attendees and will support promotion of future symposia and postdoctoral science across Cambridge. The active networking format was also highly effective, with workshops and discussion sessions helping to keep the audience engaged throughout the day.

## Wider programme

Beyond the symposium, the portfolio delivered bimonthly Research Cyber Cafés at the West Hub and development workshops, including Science in Metaphors with SamSpeaksScience, leadership in research, and Resilience in Academic Institutions with PdA. These activities provided regular opportunities for discussion, training, and professional growth.

## Partnerships and outcomes

The year's activities were made possible by strong collaboration and sponsorship from West Hub, Enterprise, Isaac Newton, Philosophical, Hellenic, MatNex, and Carbon Re. The symposium generated a financial surplus, which will be retained to support the 2026–2027 symposium and reinvested into future programming.

## Reflections

Overall, this was a highly successful year for the Research and Development portfolio. The symposium established a strong model centred on active participation, practical value, and wider engagement, with enhanced prizes, professional photography (free LinkedIn shots for attendees), 1 min summaries of research at Cambridge, useful workshops, and active networking all contributing to a clear increase in impact and attendance.

## Departmental

I have served as Departmental Officer for the PdOC Society over the past two years. My main responsibility has been to support departmental postdoc representatives, strengthen PdOC's departmental network, and improve communication between local postdoc communities, departments, PdA, and the PdOC Management Committee.

During the 2025–2026 term, I continued to maintain and update the departmental reps information, building on earlier work to clean and refresh the local reps database. I engaged with multiple current and potential departmental representatives across the year, explaining the aims of PdOC, clarifying the role of local reps, seeking feedback on departmental postdoc needs, and connecting interested postdocs with relevant departmental and PdOC contacts. This included meeting, interacting and recruiting around 5–10 potential or current reps, supporting onboarding conversations, and encouraging more active local representation where possible.

A key activity this year was the organisation of a joint PdOC/PdA departmental postdoc engagement event with Prof. Langley, focused on postdoc self-advocacy, career progression, open and collaborative research culture, and navigating institutional structures. The format combined a speaker-led session with a curated Q&A and townhall-style discussion, creating a space for postdocs to hear from senior academic leadership while also raising practical questions about career development, research culture, and departmental support. This event also served as a model for future onboarding and engagement activities for departmental reps. I have uploaded that video with the help of university local comms team and using it for outreach:

<https://youtu.be/2FaQ9sPWZeI?si=25KS50fMT6L70qIg>

Throughout the year, I also advised on career development programming and departmental engagement, including how PdOC can better connect with postdocs through local reps, departmental administrators, and professional services contacts. I have continued to emphasise a practical and sustainable approach: while it is difficult to maintain active engagement from every department, PdOC can have meaningful impact by supporting proactive reps, sharing good practice, and creating visible opportunities for postdocs to connect across departments.

Looking ahead to 2026–2027, I propose two linked initiatives. First, I plan to organise a September 2026 departmental postdoc townhall to reactivate the reps network at the start of the academic year, gather feedback from postdocs and reps, and identify priority issues for PdOC to take forward. This would include an invited speaker, a structured discussion, and a short onboarding segment for new or potential departmental reps.

Second, I would like to develop a “Senior Academic Career Conversations” series, building on the Prof. Langley event. The idea is to conduct structured career advice interviews with senior academics, especially women and academics from underrepresented backgrounds, focusing on career pathways, self-advocacy, leadership, resilience, and navigating Cambridge structures. I have already identified up to five potential speakers and am in contact with two regarding possible dates and interview content. These conversations could be shared with postdocs as live events, written summaries, or recorded resources, depending on permissions, and used to promote engagement across departmental and postdoc communities.

Overall, my aim is to make the Departmental Officer role a bridge between representation, career development, and community-building: supporting local reps, creating spaces for postdoc voices, and helping PdOC develop a more inclusive and sustainable departmental engagement model.

## Entrepreneurial

As Entrepreneurial Officer for the Postdocs of Cambridge Society (PdOC), I represent and support Cambridge postdocs interested in entrepreneurship. I connect them to the local start-up ecosystem, relevant programmes, funding and space, and building relationships with the University's commercialisation partners on their behalf.

Key achievements:

- Entrepreneurship Subcommittee – established the subcommittee and recruited an additional member, enabling parallel event coverage and shared workload.
- Measurable engagement – subcommittee and newsletter outreach lifted postdoc applications to the Founders' Sync competition from 0 to 5.
- New venue – secured free use of the Bradfield auditorium (~120 seats) for PdOC Entrepreneurial events.
- Governance – invited onto the FUTUREROADS Steering Committee (Dept. of Engineering), advising on commercialisation pathways for MSCA-funded projects.
- Neutral IP guidance – clarified Cambridge Enterprise's commercialisation routes and fast-track equity framework (5–20% by technology type), so the subcommittee can advise postdoc founders impartially.
- Ecosystem network – built working relationships across Cambridge Enterprise, IE Cambridge, the Postdoc Academy, Founders at Cambridge, FUTUREROADS and the Bradfield Centre, giving PdOC a standing presence in the ecosystem.
- Events representation;
  - Nov 2025 – PVCC Grand Finale
  - Nov 2025 – IE Cambridge Expo
  - Feb 2026 – FUTUREROADS Industry Day & Steering Committee, Dept. of Engineering,
  - Mar 2026 – “You're a Postdoc, What's Next?” flagship event [Presentation]