

University of Cambridge

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

Minutes of the meeting in the Postdoc Centre @ 16 Mill Lane

18:00 Wednesday 28th November 2018**Attendees**

Name	Department	Email
Sankari Nagarajan	CRUK-CI	Sankari.Nagarajan@cruk.cam.ac.uk
Rob Phaal	Engineering	rp108@cam.ac.uk
Mark Ainslie	Engineering	mark.ainslie@eng.cam.ac.uk
Katharina Greve	IfM	kg403@cam.ac.uk
Cemre Ustankaya	Archaeology	mcu22@cam.ac.uk
Marta Costa	PdOC	mmc46@cam.ac.uk
Jason Brenker	CEB	jb2155@cam.ac.uk
James Savage	Zoology	jls59@cam.ac.uk
Kotryna Bloznelyte	Biochemistry	kb449@cam.ac.uk
Paul Bennett	Physics	wpb22@cam.ac.uk
Ulla Sovio	Obstetrics & Gynaecology	us253@medschl.cam.ac.uk
Francesca Vella	Music	fv250@cam.ac.uk
M Casford	Chemistry	mtlc2@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 and highlighted attendance of guest speaker Dr Rob Phaal. – *slide 1,2,3*

Attendees were reminded of the networks purpose and priorities and needs. The meetings themes were briefly explained; Research Excellence & Recognition and Strategic Career Plan & Progression. – *slide 4*

The chair notified the network with recent updates; – *slide 5,6,7,8*

- Update to contacts for the Network on the [DPCCN webpages](#). Please let hollie.godden@admin.cam.ac.uk know if you notice information that needs correcting.
- Headshots are needed to add with the contact information, send to hollie.godden@admin.cam.ac.uk
- Minutes and slides from the last meeting are available [online](#).
- Network lunches have been held since the last meeting, Mill Lane on 22nd August and BMC on 6th November – look out for more.

2. Updates on postdoc matters – Dr James Brown, Assistant Head of Office, Strategy, OPdA and Dr Tariq Masood, Chair – *slide 10 and Information paper*

a) Academic Career Pathways and support for research staff

JB informs the network that 2019 is the last year of the current Senior Academic Promotions Scheme which is to be replaced by the new Academic Careers Pathway Scheme. When the Academic Career Pathway Scheme is finalized, a review exercise will be conducted to align the Senior Research Promotions Scheme with the new model for academic progression.

KP updates that the Senior Research Promotions exercise, which a separate group has been created for, will align with a review of the career progression of teaching staff. The need to include postdocs in the new Academic Career Pathways has been recognised and needs to be discussed.

b) Researcher Development funding and opportunities for Departmental Committees

DPCCN, with PdOC and OPdA, has launched a [Researcher Development Pitch Competition](#) which gives the opportunity for departmental committees to pitch for funding for a new idea and initiatives to deliver Researcher Development in Cambridge. Open to all postdocs in university departments and colleges as well as partner institutions. Please display posters in your department.

Action: Add guide to organising RD activity, with contacts in schools, to website in new year when finalised.

Action: Circulate call to DPCCN again

c) Postdoc calendar and UTBS

A [shared postdoc calendar](#) has been launched which includes all postdoc events, university wide. Events can be submitted by going to the calendar. If you have any problems or questions please email hollie.godden@admin.cam.ac.uk

d) Payment rates for teaching activities

At the last meeting Drs. Robert Pralat and Olga Loblova informed the network of teaching payment discrepancies involving postdocs. Since the meeting, James has discussed the problem with Graham Virgo who will obtain advice. OPdA will update the network.

3. Concordat Consultation – Dr Jacek Mokrosinski - slide 13 to 22

Jacek informs the network that most people have not heard of the Concordat emphasising the need to change this. He explains the Concordat was first implemented in 2008 so is now going through a review for which a consultation period has opened for responses to recommendations made by the Concordat Strategy Group. Karina tells the network that a working group has been set up to draft an institutional response which Eilish Ferrin and Chris Abell will edit and approve for Karina to submit. Researchers 14, a group of representative from 13 Russell Group Universities, are also coordinating a response and individual responses are also welcome.

Jacek asks the network to look at the 14 recommendations and pick the 3 most important and provide further feedback.

Results:

Concordat Consultation Feedback

Mentimeter

Top three recommendations:
4, 5, 13

2, 4, 14

4,5,13 (possibly 2 and 10)

3, 4, 8

Top Three - 4, 5, 13.

factor in scope of independent work as development plan at contract start

experimental costs potentially a big barrier in some fields

flexibility important and conversations between pi and postdoc valuable per se

allow postdocs to apply for small grants as a matter of course - eg engineering

allocation of space and facilities - still need dept support, need balance between support and postdoc initiative

where fec is recovered at >100% could funds be earmarked for small funding internally?

use of time needs to be flexible - teaching? industrial placement? in blocks of time rather than weekly?

evaluation - track record of support by PIs included in future grants assessment? nb wellcome trust, cambridge acp rd criteria

use ref environment statements or funding incentives, by using CRITICAL DATA consistent across surveys or combining surveys

After the exercise the group discussed questions and points that were raised and included own thoughts.

Recommendation 4; How will the 20% independent time work, suggestion that including a statement of career progression at the beginning of the contract or an extra project defined at the start will help implement. Having a staff review career development plan and include the time taken with results in the review will also help however, across the institution there is a 28% review rate for researchers which is only up 10% in four years. Funding for experimental costs is problematic, can there be a method to cover research costs of own project, having time could be useless if unable to conduct research using instruments and equipment and need for own space to work on own project. Postdocs need to be proactive with own projects and own time, taking responsibility of own career.

Recommendation 14; Exercises for awards such as HR Excellence and Athena Swann are becoming repetitive in terms of contact being copied from one to the other and becoming costly to institutions for the amount of time it takes. Suggestion that all are merged into one award or response from institutions.

Recommendation 7; Agreement that Equality and Diversity should be embedded.

Recommendation 2; Hidden researchers are different in all institutions so it is difficult to label who is included. Technicians have own concordat.

Action: Circulate open document for comments

4. Break

5. Senior Researcher Promotions – *Dr Tariq Masood and Dr Rob Phaal – slides 25 to 30*

Displaying a table showing the number of PRA's and DoR's by school, Tariq explains that PRA's and DoR are often recruited into roles rather than the role being filled by promotion but promotion should be encouraged. The majority of postdocs fall into the 1-3 years category for length of service with a distinct change in year 3-4 as shown on slide 27. The University does not currently use Grade 8 and 10 for RA's and SRA's and a researcher must be grade 9 to apply for SRP.

The SRP 2019 exercise has been launched. The general guidance states that two criteria need to be met to be eligible, Tariq highlights that a third criteria is hidden in the launch letter "Confirmation that funding is available to support the higher salary costs for the duration of the appointment will be required."

Dr Rob Phall described his experiences with SRP to the network.

Rob explains that everyone's situation is different, he had no academic career background but he managed to find funding and a PI who needed a postdoc team at SRA level. A key part

was funding, Rob made sure he met lots of external people and made himself known. Using a web platform to communicate with the world and industry for references and funding.

Comments and feedback received from the network:

Senior Researcher Promotions Feedback

Mentimeter

current criteria - 1. research quality 2. journal contribution (3. ongoing funding in some form)

Lack of an "intermediate" position between RA and SRA reflecting the status of senior post docs (SRA and PRA awarded to actual PIs, not Postdoc)

RA->SRA promotions should be included in SRP and unified across the university

Need to find a potential solution for SRP to introduce Grade 10 in between G9 and G11

- 6. AOB and Next Meeting – Tariq**
Next meeting date to be circulated

APPROVED