

Postdocs of Cambridge Society Annual Report 2025

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.

2024/2025 Committee Members

President	Yoon Hee Choi
Vice President	Nino Läubli
Treasurer	Roberta Palmulli
Secretary	Lena Quambusch
Social and Networking Events Officer	Elsa Amsellem
Communications Officer	Emilia Arguello
College Affiliations Officer	Hanane Hadj-Moussa
Researcher Development Officer	Eddison Loades
Departmental Officer	Soujanya Mantravadi
Welfare, Equality and Diversity Officers	Markus Hellenbrand María Lopez-Cavestany
Entrepreneurial Officer	Eashan Saikia
Marketing and Social Media Officer	Yagmur Yildizhan
Senior Treasurer	Nicky Blanning

Activities of the 2024/2025 Committee

President

As President of PdOC, I have had the privilege of liaising with various senior members of the University and participating in multiple representative groups across the University. Throughout the year, I have worked to amplify the diverse voices of the postdoctoral community, ensuring their perspectives are heard and considered.

I have been actively involved in several University initiatives, including the Race Equality Charter Stakeholder discussions, the Reward and Recognition working group, and the New Visiting Scholars committee. I have helped amplify the voice of postdocs by highlighting the Academic Career Pathway for Researchers (ACP-R), an initiative aimed to make career progression more transparent and consistent for research staff, that was accepted this year. Internationally, I represented Cambridge postdocs at the Eurodoc meeting, which focused on challenges and developments affecting early career researchers across Europe.

Following last year's constitutional amendment, the Vice President and I had an informal meeting with the Director of HR, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, and the Head of the Postdoc Academy. We raised a number of recurring concerns shared by postdocs, and we look forward to continuing these valuable discussions to identify and implement sustainable solutions.

One of our key goals this year has been to initiate a University-wide postdoc wellbeing survey. The purpose of this survey is to assess current support mechanisms, highlight examples of best practice, and identify opportunities to enhance wellbeing and research culture for postdocs. Our EDI Officer is spearheading this initiative, having successfully fostered collaborations with the Research Culture team and the Action Research for Research Culture team. We are currently seeking feedback from HR, the Postdoc Academy, and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, with the aim of submitting the survey for ethics approval and launching it in the coming year.

A continued priority for PdOC has been to strengthen and expand the postdoc community. I have represented PdOC at the Postdoc Welcome Events hosted by the Postdoc Academy, where I introduced new postdocs to PdOC's activities and opportunities. We have organised and co-hosted a number of successful events, including the Research Showcase and the annual Garden Party at Emmanuel College. We have also continued to facilitate a range of social activities to help build community and connection among postdocs, such as pub and restaurant nights, College brunches, and picnics. In support of postdoc wellbeing, I helped organise a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction training course, as well as a film screening in celebration of International Women's Day.

Additionally, I have also been engaged in entrepreneurial activities, strengthening PdOC's connections with IE Cambridge and Cambridge Enterprise, having continued discussions on how PdOC could be more involved in entrepreneurial activities. I have also represented PdOC at the recent "You're a Postdoc, What's Next" event organised by IE Cambridge, highlighting how PdOC can aid postdocs with their entrepreneurial endeavours. I hope PdOC can continue to work closely with these teams to better support postdocs wanting to branch out into the enterprise space.

Vice President

In my role as Vice-President, I've supported the President of the Society in various activities and conversations across the University. For example, in preparation for our meeting with the Director of HR, the PVC for Community and Engagement, as well as the Head of PdA, I've collected and structured the diverse topics brought up by the community as well as other PdOC committee members. Further, I've supported the President in their engagement with the community by responding to and/or addressing concerns brought up by its members, and by liaising with relevant bodies. Additionally, I've been closely involved with the organisation of individual items and events, including the planning and preparation of the annual research showcase, the support of the highly successful "STEM meets AHSS" workshop, or the flysheet submitted ahead of the Regent House vote on the APC(R), while further serving as a point of contact for both local enquiries about future activities and as well as national or international points of discussion and matters of interest including concerning discrepancies in researcher support or UK-visa related issues. Finally, I've represented the diverse views of the community within a variety of initiatives as part of different committees and working groups, including on short-term contracts as well as reward and recognition.

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.

The current final balance is £7,828.88 (on 22/07/2025). This year, the Society made a net positive of £3,500.77. This is mostly due to the presence of an "Entrepreneurial Fund" transferred to the Society by EPOC, a no longer existing organization, and that is available to the Society for the organization of entrepreneurial activities. Moreover, a donation of £1500 was made by PdA and will be used to subsidise some of our social activities due to take place during the academic year 2025-2026.

During the current year, major cash flows were linked to the 2024 annual general meeting, research showcase 2024, end-of-the-year dinner, and garden party.

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. Occasionally I supported the Events officer and organised one or two PostDoc climbing sessions at Rainbow Rocket.

Social and Networking Events

As the 2025 Social Events Officer, I organised a variety of events throughout the year. These included 12 regular or themed pub nights (such as quiz nights, Halloween night, and Eurovision night), a walk to Grantchester, a Sunday roast, an ice-skating and Christmas market outing, a Christmas dinner, and the annual Garden Party. I also collaborated with other societies, organising a Cuban Salsa night with the Cuban Salsa Society and a quiz night with the PdA.

To ensure inclusivity, I 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 and around 100 attending the Garden Party. I am currently organising the Committee Pub Night and the AGM.

At each pub night, we welcomed newcomers by adding them to our unofficial WhatsApp group, where members frequently propose informal meetups such as cinema outings, game nights, dinners, parties, 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

The role of the PdOC communications officer is to help prepare and distribute the PdOC weekly newsletters, with support from the PdA, to the postdoc body at the university. I work closely with other members of the committee (e.g., Social Events Officers, Entrepreneurship Officer, Welfare & EDI Officers) to ensure useful information is transmitted to the postdocs of Cambridge. I coordinate with internal partners (e.g., NVS, Career Services, Cambridge Enterprise) to advertise particularly important events as well as suggest our platform to external partners. I also organize a schedule for newsletter distribution duties and fully prepare the newsletter when PdA support is not available. My goal for the 2024-2025 academic year has been to support PdOC in all these capacities. From July 2024 to June 2025, a total of 50 newsletters were prepared with the help of the PdA and distributed weekly to postdocs based on the agreed-upon rota system. The engagement so far is of ~330 views per weekly newsletter, with each read lasting an average of 2 minutes. The most visited newsletter, distributed during the third week of January, recorded a total of 467 views. No major challenges have been faced.

College Affiliations

Between 2024 and 2025, I collaborated with PdA and Elsa Amsellem to launch a successful podcast on

college affiliations, which aired in October 2024.

<https://creators.spotify.com/pod/profile/postdoc-academy/>

Alongside this, I initiated and organized a monthly brunch series for postdocs, both affiliated and unaffiliated with colleges. These events have been hosted across several colleges, including Jesus, Corpus Christi, Pembroke, Newnham, and Downing, with approximately 35 attendees at each gathering. The brunches have become some of the most popular and well-attended events of the year, and I plan to continue coordinating them. Additionally, I plan to work with PdA and Dr. Ian Wilson, President of Jesus College, to organize a workshop focused on answering questions about college affiliations and highlighting their benefits and requirements. I also regularly support postdocs by responding to individual queries about the college affiliation process. I am pleased to report that no major challenges were encountered this year, and I look forward to continuing these initiatives and expanding outreach in the months ahead.

Welfare, Equality and Diversity

Markus Hellenbrand: The main role of the Wellbeing & EDI officer is to provide information for postdocs in the Cambridge community on matters related to wellbeing and inclusion and to help create a community everyone feels welcome to be a part of. As one of the joint Wellbeing officers of 2024-2025, with a focus on mental health, I initiated a university-wide project for a postdoc wellbeing survey, to gather data about often anecdotal struggles that postdocs are facing. The survey is to be rolled out across all departments of the University, and the results will be compiled into reports to summarise major pain points, but also good practice. I gathered the support for this project by the University Research Culture Team, the University Action Research on Research Culture Team, the University Wellbeing Team, the Postdoc Academy, and the Pro-vice Chancellor Prof Kamal Munir. I am currently working on getting approval by the Ethics Board and hope to roll out the survey in the new academic year.

María Lopez-Cavestany: 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 have continued to maintain and update the Wellbeing and ED&I resource guide on the PdOC website. I organized a Mental Health Picnic aimed at creating a relaxed, social space to discuss wellbeing topics. Throughout the year, I have worked to ensure that the PdOC website remains current and reflective of both wellbeing and ED&I priorities within the postdoc community.

Marketing and Social Media

Since February 2024, I have served as the Marketing and Social Media Officer for the Postdocs of Cambridge Society (PdOC). My primary responsibility is to enhance the visibility and engagement of PdOC within the University of Cambridge and beyond, through targeted marketing initiatives and the strategic management of our social media channels. While we continue to maintain a presence on Facebook and Twitter, the majority of our communication, outreach, and engagement activities during

this period were conducted via LinkedIn and Instagram.

During the 2024–2025 term, PdOC's social media landscape consisted of the following:

LinkedIn:

- Page created: 12 September 2023
- Followers (as of July 2025): 847
- Total organic impressions in the last year: 7,363
- *LinkedIn has become our primary platform for professional networking, event promotion, and community updates.*

Instagram:

- Page created: 30 May 2023
- Followers (as of July 2025): 247
- *Instagram is now our main channel for visual storytelling and event highlights.*

A major achievement this year was the organization and promotion of the **4th PdOC Annual Research Showcase**, held in collaboration with the Cambridge West Hub on 7 November 2024.

Programme Highlights:

- Full-day event (09:00–18:00): welcome reception, talks, keynotes, poster sessions, networking, and drinks reception.
- Keynotes by Prof. Dame Athene Donald and Prof. Sander van der Linden.
- Diverse oral and poster presentations by postdoctoral researchers in STEMM and AHSS.
- Awards for best oral and poster presentations.

The Research Showcase was delivered as a **free-of-charge event**, supported through sponsorship.

- **West Hub, Isaac Newton Trust, Cambridge Enterprise and Cambridge Philosophical Society.**

Researcher Development

Since June 2024, I have served as the Researcher and Development Officer for the Postdocs of Cambridge Society (PdOC). My primary responsibility is organising the annual PdOC Research Showcase. I also represent postdocs in researcher training initiatives, University-wide panels, and other postdoc-focused programs.

The 2024 PdOC Research Showcase took place on 7 November and was organized by the PdOC committee in collaboration with the Cambridge West Hub, which hosted the event. This year, the event was open to final-year PhD students and postdocs from surrounding institutions (e.g., the Sanger Institute, Babraham Institute, and Anglia Ruskin University). With over 90 attendees, feedback indicated the event was highly successful.

Committees include:

University of Cambridge Career's Committee

- Representatives from across the University meet termly to discuss graduate career prospects, outcomes, and operational improvements for the Careers Committee.

University of Cambridge Career's Syndicate

- The Careers Syndicate is a Cambridge University committee focused on coordinating career development strategies across colleges, addressing student skills training, alumni engagement, and regulatory compliance (e.g., Graduate Outcomes Survey, REF/NSS metrics).
- Key Activities: It facilitates collaboration between college career teams and central

services—sharing best practices (e.g., Jesus College’s mentoring program), piloting tools like the Skills Portal, and ensuring alignment with university-wide employability goals.

Post Doc Work Shadow Project

- The Careers Service secured funding to create 30 work shadowing opportunities for Cambridge postdocs, helping them explore non-academic career paths amid fixed-term contract challenges.

Departmental

I have served as the Departmental Officer for the PdOC since 2 years. My primary responsibility is to support departmental postdoc representatives (DepReps), strengthen PdOC’s departmental network, and improve communication and collaboration between the PdOC Management Committee and the wider postdoc community across the University.

Over the 2024–2025 term, my efforts have focused on four key areas:

1. Maintaining and Expanding the DepRep Network:

- Led the 2025 update of PdOC’s departmental reps database, in collaboration with the Society Secretary.
- Proactively contacted departments without known postdoc representation, engaging with administrative staff to confirm or identify new reps.
- Responded to new expressions of interest, such as from the Department of Geography, guiding interested reps through onboarding and expectations.

2. Planning a Joint PdOC/PdA Departmental Event:

- Organizing a collaborative event with the Postdocs of Cambridge Academy (PdA), scheduled for July 2025, with a theme on *Postdoc self-advocacy and open research culture*.
- The event will include a recorded keynote session and an open, town hall-style discussion to gather feedback and highlight challenges faced by postdocs in different departments.
- All departmental stakeholders, including administrators and professional services staff, will be invited.
- The session will be curated to maintain focus on the theme and will serve as a resource for onboarding new reps.

2. Fostering a Collaborative Channel for Reps:

- Initiated discussions with PdA on setting up an online channel or shared document for reps to exchange ideas, promote local initiatives, and share best practices.
- Proposed low-maintenance tracking via spreadsheets to reduce the burden of one-on-one follow-ups.
- Acknowledged that while consistent engagement from all departments cannot be enforced, our focus remains on empowering those who are proactive and responsive.

2. Support and Communication:

- Responded to individual queries from reps and interested candidates throughout the year.
- Provided guidance on departmental postdoc engagement strategies, event planning, and the role of PdOC. For example, one such initiative was ‘Postdoc wine n cheese’ meetups at Engineering dept.
- Emphasised that communication with departmental admins is often the most effective route to reaching the postdoc community, given the turnover and voluntary nature of rep roles.

Looking ahead, I plan to follow up with the University Comms team to explore uploading event

recordings to official platforms (e.g., YouTube), and to formalise a feedback loop from reps post-event. I also hope to co-create a sustainable