

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

Notes of the meeting in The Postdoc Centre @ 16 Mill Lane
 6pm Thursday 29 May 2014

1. Meeting aims and outcomes:

- A report summarizing the needs of both the postdoc community AND the Departmental Postdoc Committees. This report will go to the University's HR committee via the OPdA management committee.
- A mechanism to share information/documents/inspiration between committees.
- Agreed terms of reference for the chairs committee.

Prof Chris Abell, Director of Postdoctoral Affairs, and Karina Prasad, Head of the OPdA were introduced to the committee. Postdoc committee representatives were welcomed to the Postdoc Centre and a brief update on the progress and strategy of the OPdA was presented.

2. Invited attendees

Department	Name	email
Archaeology and Anthropology	Ronika Power	rkp30@cam.ac.uk
Biochemistry	Neil Rzechorzek	njr48@cam.ac.uk postdocs-committee@bioc.cam.ac.uk
Chemical Engineering	Claire Michel	chmm2@cam.ac.uk
Chemistry	Steve Driver	smd37@cam.ac.uk
Clinical Neurosciences	Adina Feldman	af550@medschl.cam.ac.uk
CRASSH	Kate Nichols	ekn26@cam.ac.uk
Engineering	Evros Loukaides	el249@cam.ac.uk
Genetics	Sara Imarisio	postdoc-cttee@gen.cam.ac.uk
GRASP committee	Neil Rzechorzek	http://www.gradschl.lifesci.cam.ac.uk/GRASP
Gurdon Institute	Emmanuelle Vire	ev252@cam.ac.uk
Institute of Metabolic Science	Jacek Mokrosinski	jm972@medschl.cam.ac.uk
Materials Science	Paul Coxon	prc39@cam.ac.uk
Physics	Ventsi Valev	vkv23@cam.ac.uk
Physiology, Development and Neuroscience	Natalia Bulgakova	pdn-postdoc-reps@lists.cam.ac.uk nb390@cam.ac.uk
Primary Care Unit (IPH)	Suzanna Forwood	sef26@cam.ac.uk
Psychology	Nicole Horst	nh382@cam.ac.uk
Sanger	Lia Chappell Liesbet Lieben	lc5@sanger.ac.uk ll7@sanger.ac.uk
Stem Cell Institute	Clara Novo	clara.novo@babraham.ac.uk
Postdoc staff coordinator - acting as chair	Joy Warde	joy.warde@admin.cam.ac.uk
Chair of the DPCCN (PdOC representative)	Tariq Masood	tm487@cam.ac.uk
Director OPdA	Chris Abell	ca26@cam.ac.uk
Head OPdA	Karina Prasad	head.opda@admin.cam.ac.uk

3. Prioritisation of Postdoc needs I

Representatives from the departmental postdoc committees identified 13 needs* and prioritized these during the meeting in the following order. No. 1 being the most important.

1	postdocs have the opportunity to achieve research excellence and recognition
2	postdocs have support for their strategic career plan and progression
3	postdocs have leadership and teaching opportunities
4	postdocs are represented at a departmental and University level
5	postdocs have access to appropriate and timely mentoring support
6	postdocs have a meaningful professional review e.g. with PI or line manager
7	postdocs have access to personal and professional development opportunities
8	postdocs are supported when moving to careers outside academia
9	postdocs have networking opportunities (both professionally and socially)
10	postdocs have a timely induction and are welcomed to Cambridge.
11	postdocs receive 'alumni' benefits on leaving Cambridge
12	postdocs have a centrally managed listing for all training opportunities (e.g. careers, PPD etc)
13	postdocs have access to Collegiate Cambridge i.e. College affiliation

* These broad needs were identified from two main sources in advance of the meeting. All chairs were asked to report, in advance, on the main priorities for the postdocs in their department. These responses were categorised by the Chair and Secretary and combined with broad themes identified in the PdOC 'wishlist' April 2013.

4. Prioritisation of Postdoc needs II – possible solutions

The chairs considered the top 4 priorities, as identified above, and reflected on the actual challenge faced and shared ideas for possible solutions.

postdocs have the opportunity to achieve research excellence and recognition

<i>Specific challenge</i>	<i>Possible solutions</i>
Credit for grant writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a small competitive funding pot for grants for small scale postdoc led projects. The postdoc leads on the funding proposal, financial management and reporting. Useful skill to demonstrate on CV. Note: A model for this exists at the Sanger Institute. • Postdoc to be included as co-investigators. Named on grants by PIs, encouraged by OPdA. • Finance – control over own grants, not just given to PI only.
Publications – 1 st author issues + last author issues (if you got a grant in your name ...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project 'contract' with PI and other authors (agreed near start of project), needs to be variable as one size doesn't fit all.
Recognition for contribution to research/teaching by department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prizes for achievements

postdocs have support for their strategic career plan and progression

<i>Specific challenge</i>	<i>Possible solutions</i>
Lack of adequate induction and mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the current mentoring and induction provision. Who can postdocs talk to about career progression? Is this clear to postdocs? An option of a formally assigned career adviser in each department • Raise awareness of the right to have a mentor – a contractual issue • PIs to take responsibility/acknowledge these issues
Effective appraisal/review Purpose of review isn't well understood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase education around the review process. i.e. looking at longer term career goals and progression. Education required for both postdocs and PIs.

postdocs have leadership and teaching opportunities

<i>Specific challenge</i>	<i>Possible solutions</i>
Meaningful teaching opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased College affiliation – may lead to more teaching opportunities (particularly if postdoc has not been a PhD student at Cambridge) • Recognized process for postdocs to supplement lectures (not just fill in when lecturer absent) • Postdoc led seminars and postdoc led graduate lectures • Certification of teaching
Leadership opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership training for postdocs • Funding for small projects to allow opportunity to develop leadership skills. • Supervision of postgrads – official recognition / certification

postdocs are represented at a departmental and University level

<i>Specific challenge</i>	<i>Possible solutions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of transparency / awareness of existing committees / decision structure • Same person on all committees? Issues around postdoc time management and recognition of this role • Department seen as not supportive. Who can raise problems – Who do we go to ask to be represented? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rethink/restructure committees to include postdocs • Obligation to publish structure of committees • Mediators – between postdocs and dept/Uni • Share ideas / best practice with the Institutes (Gurdon, Babraham etc.) • Consider the roles in postdoc committees – aim to share the load • Invite Chris Abell, as Director of Postdoctoral Affairs to visit your department and meet your postdoc community AND Head of Department • Athena-Swan agenda is a driving force for opening up dialogue

5. How can the OPdA /PdOC support your postdoc committee?

Support from the OPdA / PdOC was discussed under the following headings.

Networking opportunities

OPdA /PdOC to provide networking opportunities for postdoc committee members to meet and share best practice with postdoc committees from other departments.

Influencing

Key challenges:

- To be taken seriously by senior management in department
- Getting postdoc representation on departmental committees (what committees exist?)

Support ideas:

- OPdA to provide support on how to start a committee and training to make it effective. Ask a PI to sit on your committee to act as a postdoc champion. Ask a member of admin/HR staff to sit on committee to act as postdoc champion.
Note: refer to ' Guide to Postdoc Committees'.
- OPdA to act as a postdoc advocate and champion of postdoc committees at a senior level. Demonstration of the support from the 'top'.
- OPdA to support and encourage departments to get postdocs on other dept level committees
- Provision of mediation between postdoc committee and senior management
- Consider a document outlining minimal expectations for postdocs in department – a postdoc charter
- Extend an invitation to Prof Chris Abell, Director of Postdoctoral affairs to meet the postdoc community in individual departments.

Event support

Key Challenges:

- Getting engagement from the postdoc community
- Funding for internal events e.g. teas/coffees etc.

Support ideas:

- OPdA to coordinate and liaise between department groups and RDC funding decisions to encourage cross discipline RD funding
- Better advertising of available funds
- Central management of funds – perhaps in OPdA
- Shared ideas for speakers / share access for international speakers and/or trusted / quality speakers (grant writing, career progression)
- Admin support with large scale events.
- Departmental support for small scale (within Department) events (e.g. catering and email support)

Postdoc committee skills training

- Chairing, negotiation with department
- Fund raising. It is unclear the process for bidding and access to the Researcher Development fund.

Note: The school reps on the RDC can be found on the OPDA website
<http://www.opda.cam.ac.uk/whileincambridge/rdc>

- Other (industry) sponsorship for events – training on fund raising
- Recruitment and participation of postdocs on your committee
- Committee management (role allocation and turnover of postdocs)

Information and shared documents

- Access and information on Cambridge wide schemes e.g. mentoring, review etc.
- Committee advice on the end of the phone/email
- Shared sample documents e.g. how to start a committee, terms of reference, event organization, induction etc.
- Document outlining minimal expectations for postdocs in department – a postdoc charter

The Postdoc Centre

- Central focus for non department specific events
- Admin support with large scale events.
- Better advertising of available funds
- Central management of funds – perhaps in OPdA

6. Planning of future meetings of the Departmental Postdoc Committee Chairs Network

Meeting format:

It was agreed that the chairs network would meet termly. An annual meeting would not be sufficient to build up networks and share experience. Early evening would maximize attendance. It was noted that this could cause child care issues for some postdocs.

Membership: to include

- the chair (or other representative) from each departmental committee
- postdoc coordinator(s) at CRASSH
- other cross department postdoc groups e.g. postdoc reps on GRASP, postdoc reps from strategic research initiatives and networks (<http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/research-at-cambridge/strategic-research-initiatives-networks>)

Note: do we need to define a 'postdoc'?

Action: TM and JW to identify and invite any postdoc reps to join the chairs network

Action: JW to seed committees in other departments. Advert to be placed in PdOC newsletter.

Reporting:

The chairs network will initially report to

(1) The OPdA management committee. This Director of Postdoctoral Affairs will take the report to the HR committee

(2) The Postdoc community via the weekly PdOC newsletter and the termly OPdA newsletter

Note: How do we contribute to the UK and worldwide postdoc voice: How does this group link with other UK wide and world postdoc associations?

7. Date of next meeting. Michaelmas term 2014