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
12.30pm Wednesday 8 October 2014

1. Attendees

Tariq Masood (chair), welcomed attendees to the second Departmental Postdoc Committee Chairs Network (DPCCN) meeting.

Department	Name	Contact
Biochemistry	Neil Rzechorzek	njr48@cam.ac.uk
Chemical Engineering	Claire Michel	chmm2@cam.ac.uk
Chemistry	Steve Driver	smd37@cam.ac.uk
CIMR	George Giotopoulos	gg320@cam.ac.uk
Computer Lab	Sophie van der Zee	sv361@cam.ac.uk
EMBL-EBI postdocs committee	Amelie Baud	abaud@ebi.ac.uk
Engineering	John Coull	el249@cam.ac.uk
Materials Science, and PdOC Rep	Paul Coxon	prc39@cam.ac.uk
Neurosciences	Maria Herva-Moyano	meh67@cam.ac.uk
PDN, and PdOC Rep	Natalia Bulgakova	nb390@cam.ac.uk
PdOC President	Maya Ghoussaini	mg458@medschl.cam.ac.uk
Physics	Adrian Ionescu	ai222@cam.ac.uk
Primary Care Unit	Suzanna Forwood	sef26@cam.ac.uk
Psychology	Rory Devine	rtd24@cam.ac.uk
Sanger	Liesbet Lieben	ll7@sanger.ac.uk
Social Anthropology	Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov	ns267@cam.ac.uk
Stem Cell Institute	Clara Novo	clara.novo@babraham.ac.uk
Vet school	Anaid Diaz	ad634@cam.ac.uk
Zoology	Alecia Carter	ac854@cam.ac.uk
CRASSH	Kate Nichols	ekn26@cam.ac.uk
Archaelogy and Anthropology	Ronika Power	rkp30@cam.ac.uk
Clinical Neurosciences, and PdOC Rep	Adina Feldman	af550@medschl.cam.ac.uk
Genetics	Sara Imarisio	si239@cam.ac.uk
Gurdon Inst	Emma. Vire	ev252@cam.ac.uk
Plant Sciences	Stephanie Swarbreck	ss2062@cam.ac.uk
Secretary	Joy Warde	Joy.warde@admin.cam.ac.uk
Chair of the DPCCN, and PdOC Rep	Tariq Masood	tm487@cam.ac.uk
Head OPdA	Karina Prasad	head.opda@admin.cam.ac.uk
HR Business Manager	Sarah Botcherby	slb41@cam.ac.uk

Note: a current list of the chair or other rep from each department committee can be found at http://www.pdoc.cam.ac.uk/what/departmentcommittees

2. Introductions and Welcome

The chair outlined the aims of the DPCNN which are to

- provide a wide ranging, representative postdoc 'voice' to prioritise needs and contribute to the University wide strategy for postdocs.
- share best practice, ideas and experiences between departments.
- provide face to face advice, support, training for postdocs who are members of a departmental postdoc committee
- provide guidance and support for postdocs and departments who wish to set up a departmental postdoc committee
- establish and engage in training opportunities for chairing and managing committees

At the inaugural meeting in May 2014 the DPCCN identified and prioritised 13 postdoc needs (listed in Appendix 1)

Since that meeting a paper outlining the scope of the DPCCN and the identified needs has been received by the Researcher Development Committee, the OPdA Management Committee. A paper is due to be submitted to the HR Committee in Jan 2015.

It was recognised that all 13 postdoc needs are a priority and individual postdocs may prioritise in a different order. Teaching opportunities for postdocs was raised as a priority for many attendees and it was agreed to include teaching opportunities as an item in next DPCCN meeting
Action: JW to add teaching opportunities to Lent Term agenda
Action: JW to circulate meeting notes from May 2014 + committee guide to the attendees.

3. Effective Departmental Support for Postdoc Committees

Departmental postdoc committees will be most effective and sustainable if they are adequately supported and integrated into their host departments. **The attendees had been asked to consider following questions:**

- How is your department currently supporting your postdoc committee?
- How could your department better support your committee?
- Do you receive any funding for networking events?
- Do you receive any help with administration e.g. access to an up to date postdoc mailing list?
- How do postdocs contribute to the decision making in your department (e.g. do postdocs sit on any other departmental committees)?

The outcome of this discussion will be used by Director of Postdoctoral Affairs in his communication with Heads of Departments. Appendix 2 contains a summary of the discussion with examples of good practice.

4. Postdoc Committee Success Stories

Claire Michel outlined the successful formation of a postdoc committee in Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology. This has largely been driven by a 'bottom up' approach with postdocs pushing for the creation of a committee. The committee was formally initiated after Prof Chris Abell presented

at an open meeting attended by a number of postdocs and HoD. However, it was reported that their committee faced a challenging situation in a department where there were low numbers of postdocs being offered SRD and the department was split over two sites.

Natalia Bulgakova gave a summary of the well established postdoc committee in Department of Physiology, Development and Neuroscience (PDN). The committee has a very supportive academic champion who recognized the particular needs of the postdocs in PDN. The academic champion sits on the departmental management committee. Postdocs are represented at staff meetings where there is a postdoc standing item. PDN organizes a wide range of events e.g. welcome events, postdoc symposia, postdoc masterclasses. The committee has high visibility in the department via web pages and through information contained in postdoc induction packs.

5. Consultation on the new staff review system

Sarah Botcherby, HR business manager, and Karina Prasad, Head of OPdA, attended for this agenda item. Sarah outlined the purpose, background and current state of the SRD process. HR have developed a SRD framework with a set of key principles, which can be implemented in departments. The framework can either be used 'off the shelf' or adapted to suit a particular department. However there was a recognized issue of implementation within departments and subsequent take up.

There followed a wide ranging discussion about the SRD process as experienced by individual postdocs and the mismatch between University Policy, implementation and take up. Issues around lack of understanding by both PIs and postdocs about the purpose of SRD were raised. Clear guidance over 'what is review?', 'what is not review?', and 'what to expect?' are needed. Postdocs also highlighted examples of lack of understanding from the PI as the purpose of SRD.

It was agreed that there was not enough time allocated to this item for proper discussion and so it was agreed to form an SRD working group.
Action: JW to invite interested postdocs to join the SRD working group.
Action: Further comments on SRD and the proposed new online system are welcomed. All to email JW with further comments. JW to collate.

6. Departmental Postdoc Committee Chairs Network

The terms of reference [**DPCCN terms of reference approved 8-10-2014**] was agreed.

In order to sustain the network it was suggested that a Vice Chair position(s) be created.
Action: interested postdocs should contact JW/TM to express interest

7. AOB and next network meeting

The process for applying for an increment increase was raised as a potential future agenda item

Action: JW to email out link to the University procedure for increment points

8. Date of next meeting – Lent Term 2015 (exact date to be confirmed).

DPCCN October 2014

Appendix 1 - Identification and Prioritisation of Postdoc Needs

List of 13 postdoc needs* as identified and prioritised at the launch of the Departmental Postdoc Committee Chairs Network, May 2014.

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
13	postdocs have access to Collegiate Cambridge i.e. College affiliation

* These broad themes were identified by the chairs of the departmental postdoc committees and combined with needs identified in a PdOC led survey on postdoc needs, April 2013. Consequently, these needs were prioritized by the postdocs attending the launch of the Departmental Postdoc Committee Chairs Network, May 2014.

Appendix 2 – Examples of Effective Departmental Support for Postdoc Committees

Departmental postdoc committees will be most effective and sustainable if they are adequately supported and integrated into their host department. Examples of good practice identified by the Departmental Postdoc Committee Chairs Network (October 2014) include:

1. A named academic champion who can provide
   – genuine support and guidance,
   – liaison with senior academic and administrative staff,
   – departmental knowledge, institutional memory,
   – continuity as the postdoc members join and leave the committee.
2. Recognition and a voice
   – postdoc committee is recognized and integrated into the departmental committee structure,
   – postdoc committee is consulted on issues relating to postdoc experiences and professional development,
   – visibility – postdoc committee should be known to postdocs and departmental staff.
3. A named administrative champion who can facilitate
   – a link with departmental HR,
   – event administration (including purchasing) support,
   – access to postdoc committee pages on the department's website,
   – continuity as the postdoc members join and leave the committee.
4. Communication mechanisms
   – creation and maintenance of a mailing list of current postdoc staff,
   – provision of postdoc specific pages on the department's website and physical notice boards,
   – inclusion of information about the postdoc committee and their activities in departmental induction sessions and welcome packs for new postdocs.
5. Support for Researcher Development and networking activities
   – collaboration between the postdoc committee and departmental planning and delivery of researcher development activities,
   – funding for a number of postdoc led researcher development and networking activities.