

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

Minutes of the meeting in The Postdoc Centre @ 16 Mill Lane
12.00pm Tuesday 19 May 2015

1. Attendees

| Department or Institute | Name | Contact |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Chair and PdOC committee | Tariq Masood | tm487@cam.ac.uk |
| Vice- chair Archaeology and Anthropology | Robyn Veal | rjv33@cam.ac.uk |
| Babraham (Stem Cell Institute) | Clara Novo | Clara.Novo@babraham.ac.uk |
| Biochemistry | Rita Monson | rem46@hermes.cam.ac.uk |
| Chemical Engineering | Claire Michel | chmm2@cam.ac.uk |
| Chemistry | Steve Driver | smd37@hermes.cam.ac.uk |
| Computer Lab | Alice Hutchings | ah793@cam.ac.uk |
| Engineering | Pieter Desnerck | pieter.desnerck@eng.cam.ac.uk |
| Genetics | Penny Hayward | pch34@cam.ac.uk |
| Gurdon Institute | Juan Manuel Gomez | jmg206@cam.ac.uk |
| Institute Metabolic Science | Jacek Mokrosinski | jm972@medschl.cam.ac.uk |
| Judge Business School | Arjun Mahalingam | am2257@cam.ac.uk |
| Materials Science | Paul Coxon | prc39@cam.ac.uk |
| Music | Ananay Aguilar | aa752@cam.ac.uk |
| PDN | Natalia Bulgakova | nb390@cam.ac.uk |
| Physics | Chris Braithwaite | chb32@cam.ac.uk |
| Plant Sciences | Katrin Geisler | kg404@cam.ac.uk |
| Vice-chair Primary Care Unit | Suzannah Forwood | sef26@cam.ac.uk |
| Primary Care Unit | Joanne Emery | jle40@medschl.cam.ac.uk |
| Psychology | Kate Ellis-Davies | kge22@cam.ac.uk |
| Sanger | Maria Cerezo Fernandez | mcf1@sanger.ac.uk |
| Vet School | Kyriaki Giorgakoudi | kg396@cam.ac.uk |
| Zoology | AJ Carter | writetoajhere@gmail.com |
| GRASP | Emma Cahill | enc22@cam.ac.uk |
| CEB | Krishna Mahbubani | ktam2@cam.ac.uk |
| CRUK | Sarah Thorpe | Sarah.Thorpe@cruk.cam.ac.uk |
| CRUK | Alasdair Russell | Alasdair.Russell@cruk.cam.ac.uk |
| OPdA | Karina Prasad | Karina.prasad@admin.cam.ac.uk |
| OPdA and PdOC | Joy Warde | Joy.warde@admin.cam.ac.uk |
| HR | Sarah Botcherby | Sarah.botcherby@admin.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/dpcn>

2. Introductions and Welcome

Tariq Masood (chair), welcomed attendees to the Departmental Postdoc Committee Chairs Network meeting and congratulated them on the first anniversary of the formation of the network. The chair outlined his roles in the University as a Research Associate in the Institute for Manufacturing as well as an elected Policy and Representation Officer in the PdOC Society Management Committee.

The chair reminded attendees of the DPCNN aims, 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 and 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; and
- establish and engage in training opportunities for chairing and managing committees.

The chair also reminded the network of 13 postdoc needs that were identified and prioritised at the inaugural DPCCN meeting in May 2015 (listed in Appendix 1).

The chair outlined the purposes of the meeting, namely to

- provide an update on OPdA progress and vision
- explain the Contribution Increment Scheme for Researchers
- identify and discuss priorities for DPCCN for 2015/16
- provide a networking forum for departmental postdoc committee chairs/ reps.

3. The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs – progress and future vision

Karina Prasad, head of the OPdA, reported on the significant progress and achievements of the OPdA since the opening of the Postdoc Centre in May 2014. The progress was reported in terms of meeting the 13 postdoc needs as identified by the network in May 2014 (appendix 1).

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| 1 | postdocs have the opportunity to achieve research excellence and recognition | KP has requested more information re. this need. What is recognition? |
| 2 | postdocs have support for their strategic career plan and progression | This need is linked to the other needs e.g. mentoring, induction etc. As these practical changes are delivered KP would expect greater support for postdocs to follow. |
| 3 | postdocs have leadership and teaching opportunities | PPD are refocusing strategy of teaching and leadership |
| 4 | postdocs are represented at a departmental and University level | DPCCN has grown rapidly over the past year. Where the opportunity arises postdocs are being invited to join University, School and Departmental committees e.g. Pensions working group, academic titles working group, Researcher Development etc. |
| 5 | postdocs have access to appropriate and timely | A number of small pilots have been completed. The intention is to roll out the mentoring trial to a whole school. Proposed plan |

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| | mentoring support | to set up a staffed mentoring office in Oct 2016 |
| 6 | postdocs have a meaningful professional review e.g. with PI or line manager | KP acknowledged that progress in this area is more challenging. Increasing PI engagement requires a cultural change. Concept of a PI prize may help in this area. |
| 7 | postdocs have access to personal and professional development opportunities | Ongoing. This need is being addressed via the current review of researcher development provision |
| 8 | postdocs are supported when moving to careers outside academia | This need is linked to no. 2. The OPdA is actively engaging with potential non-academic employers enabling them to understand the skills and experiences offered by postdocs. |
| 9 | postdocs have networking opportunities (both professionally and socially) | The postdoc centre has been open for one year and provides a free venue for postdoc events. |
| 10 | postdocs have a timely induction and are welcomed to Cambridge. | From October 2015, postdoc induction will be mandatory. Seven inductions are planned, (five in STEMM and 2 in AHSS with a goal of 80% attendance. |
| 11 | postdocs receive 'alumni' benefits on leaving Cambridge | An alumni benefits package has been approved and will be officially launched on 9 June. All leavers will receive an email with information in July. Further details available on http://www.opda.cam.ac.uk/beyondcambridge |
| 12 | postdocs have a centrally managed listing for all training opportunities | The concept of a central training portal had been approved by the Researcher Development Committee that will take 18 months to complete. |
| 13 | postdocs have access to Collegiate Cambridge i.e. College affiliation | A part-time position will be advertised shortly to provide an overview of what is available for postdocs, explore potential synergies between Colleges and make recommendations for increased postdoc-College engagement. |

KP also reported that an Entrepreneurial Postdocs of Cambridge Society (EPOC) had been formed. The University was collaborating with several European partners to develop a bid for a £1m Erasmus+ grant.

In the longer term, KP outlined the overarching concept of a 'Postdoctoral Foundation' that would be the successor of the OPdA with a permanent base in NW Cambridge and satellite offices in central Cambridge and on the Biomedical Campus. Approx 700 units of keyworker housing, with capped rents, will come available in NWC 2016/17.

KP also reported that the OPdA was engaging with other large issues affecting the postdoc community e.g. the NHS surcharges for non EEA visa holders, postdoc salary scales and volunteering.

A wide ranging discussion followed where KP answered questions from the network. This included the following issues raised by the attendees

- understanding of the funding issues in AHSS compared to STEMM subjects, and need for bridging funding within AHSS.
- addressing the needs of postdocs based in Colleges rather than Faculties. KP reported that the OPdA mailing list did include College JRFs. This data was supplied by the individual Colleges at the start of each academic year. All College employed JRFs were welcome to attend the OPdA

inductions events.

- attendees suggested that cultural change would require a certain level of push to complete administrative tasks e.g. SRD of postdocs should be completed in order to apply for research funding.

Action: DPCCN to feed back to OPdA further details of need no. 1.

4. Contribution Increment Scheme for Researchers

Sarah Botcherby, HR, outlined the Contribution Increment Scheme for Researchers (<http://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/pay-benefits/pay-and-reward/reward-policies/reward-schemes/contribution-increment-scheme-researchers>).

The scheme runs 3 times per year. HR communicates with HoDs, DAs and Faculty Boards. Individual departments then disseminate this information to their research staff.

Full details can be found using the weblink but in summary it is open to all RAs/SRAs and Research assistant staff employed by the University of Cambridge. Funding must be available from funder and there is a maximum, for any individual, of 3 increment points per year. An increment is awarded if either the staff member has delivered outstanding good work OR is needed to retain specialist skills. Applicants make their case using HR37 (can be completed by PI) and needs to be signed off by both PI and HoD.

A contribution reward scheme exists for assistant and academic-related staff. This is held once per year and there is a length of service criteria.

Attendees expressed concerns about how this information was disseminated at a local level. A significant number of attendees had never received this information or if they had received an email it was difficult to understand.

Attendees noted that there was an inherent conflict between gaining an increment rise and potential length of the research funding as the funding pot is finite. A number of attendees had not applied for an increment point for this reason. There is potential for a gender imbalance in the applications received.

SB noted that there is no link between the SRD process and increment points i.e. there is no general performance related pay (unlike in some other research institutes).

SB also reported on the progress on the online update to the SRD process. This is ongoing. From Michaelmas 2015 an automatic reminder will be sent to reviewers/reviewees. This will be voluntary at first and testing will commence in August 2015. HR will be producing a one page information sheet to explain the process for the postdoc community.

Action: JW to draft some introductory text to help departmental postdoc committees communicate to their postdocs. Sarah Botcherby to inform JW when the next round is launched.
Action: JW to liaise with Sarah Botcherby to gain statistics on the applications for an increment point

5. Network strategy for 2015/16

The DPCCN has identified 3 priorities for 2015/16. Each Department/Institution were asked to identify their local priorities and these were collated. The 3 priorities identified are

- support for strategic career plan and progression;

- leadership and teaching opportunities;
- access to personal and professional development opportunities.

The network then discussed each of the 3 priorities to ascertain the exact need, motivation and potential actions for the DPCCN. The outcomes will be used to plan the 3 termly meetings of the DPCCN in 2015/16.

In response to item 3 where KP had asked for more clarity on 'postdocs have the opportunity to achieve research excellence and recognition' one small group of chairs/ reps considered this area to provide immediate feedback.

Action: TM and JW to plan meeting agendas for 2015/16 based on the themes discussed.

6. AOB and meeting dates

Alice Hutchings, RA in Computer Lab, has been elected to University Council (class c member). AH introduced herself to the network. AH noted that she does not represent postdocs on University Council but she does bring her postdoc experience to Council. AH informed the network that there was a call for nominations to University Council and the Board of Scrutiny (deadline 22 May). Full details of the nomination process can be found in the Reporter.

A new set of webpages has been set up for the DPCCN (www.pdoc.cam.ac.uk/dpccn). These contain a list of chairs or department representatives, links to meeting minutes and papers and will contain shared resources. Individual committees can also link to their own departmental website.

Action: All department committees to inform JW of any changes to personnel or contact email addresses. If you would like a link to your departmental webpages please contact JW.

There will be three meetings of the DPCCN next year. The next will be an early evening meeting in the Michaelmas term. Date to be circulated.

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.

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| 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.