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 Tuesday 22 October 2015

1. Attendees

Department	Name	Email
Archaeology and Anthropology	Robyn Veal	rjv33@cam.ac.uk
Babraham	Clara Novo	Clara.Novo@babraham.ac.uk
Biochemistry/GRASP	Neil Rzechorzek	njr48@cam.ac.uk
Chemical Engineering	Claire Michel	chmm2@cam.ac.uk
Chemical Engineering	Krish Mahbubani	ktam2@cam.ac.u
Chemistry	Mike Casford	mtlc2@cam.ac.uk
CIMR	Thomas Masters	tam55@cam.ac.uk
Clinical School/Epidemiology	Helen Brown	heb56@medschl.cam.ac.uk
Computer Laboratory	Alice Hutchings	ah793@cam.ac.uk
CRUK	Deanna Patmore	Deanna.Patmore@cruk.cam.ac.uk
Engineering	Pieter Desnerck	pieter.desnerck@eng.cam.ac.uk
Genetics	Lisa Hülsmann	lcn27@cam.ac.uk
IMS	Jacek Mokrosinski	jm972@medschl.cam.ac.uk
Materials Science	Paul Coxon	prc39@cam.ac.uk
Music	Matthew Machin-Autenrieth	mm2085@cam.ac.uk
Music	Ananay Aguilar	aa752@cam.ac.uk
PDN	Helena Khaliullina	hk402@cam.ac.uk
PdOC President	Maya Ghoussaini	mg458@cam.ac.uk
Physics	Paul Bennett	wpb22@cam.ac.uk
Plant Sciences	Katrin Geisler	kg404@cam.ac.uk
Primary Care Unit	Joanne Emery	jle40@medschl.cam.ac.uk
Psychology	Nicole Horst	nh382@cam.ac.uk
Radiology	Josh Kaggie	jk636@cam.ac.uk
Social Anthropology	B. Poleykett	bp356@cam.ac.uk
Stem Cell Institute	Maria Barreira Gonzalez	mb2001@cam.ac.uk
Veterinary school	Anaid Diaz	ad634@cam.ac.uk
Zoology	Dom Cram	dc593@cam.ac.uk
Secretary	Joy Warde	joy.warde@admin.cam.ac.uk
Chair Tariq Masood	Tariq Masood	tm487@cam.ac.uk
Head of OPDA	Karina Prasad	karina.prasad@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/dpccn

2. Introductions and Welcome

Tariq Masood (chair of DPCCN) welcomed attendees to the Departmental Postdoc Committee Chairs Network meeting. The chair outlined his roles in the University as a Senior Research Associate in the Institute for Manufacturing as well as co-opted member of the PdOC Society Management Committee.

The chair summarized the aims of the DPCCN, 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 2014. These can be found at
http://www.pdoc.cam.ac.uk/dpccn/dpccnminutes

3. **Mentoring** (Karina Prasad)

Karina Prasad presented a proposal for an OPdA formal mentor/mentee matching pilot scheme to be launched in early 2016. Partnering departments include Engineering, Vet School, Clinical School. Mentee places will be offered to postdocs outside of these departments and will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

It is intended that this scheme will compliment other existing mentoring schemes and should not conflict with other schemes.

There followed a discussion around the following themes

1.   Aims of a mentor-mentee relationship

2.   Practical issues of application, timing, contract length and mentor choice.

3.   Training for mentoring

4.   Your mentoring experience as either a mentee or mentor

It was suggested that the OPdA collect details of existing schemes. Concerns were raised about how postdocs on short contracts (less that 1 year) would benefit from mentoring. In order to show success it is felt that the pilot needs at least 18 months left on contract.

It was also felt that this scheme will need top-down support in order to recruit sufficient mentors and engage with the postdoc community.

Full details and outcomes of the consultation are attached in appendix 1.   A copy can be found at
http://www.pdoc.cam.ac.uk/dpccn/dpccnminutes/15-10-22DPCCNmentoring

4. **Access to Personal and Professional Development Opportunities** (Joy Warde)

Joy Warde led the network in a consultation related to how postdocs access 'researcher development' opportunities in Cambridge. Researcher Development includes training and opportunities to provide 'added value' to your personal and professional development. This may comprise of formal skills training courses (both research skills and personal development), University teaching experience, career development planning, outreach work, entrepreneurial activities etc. RD can be provided by department, school, central services, funding body, Colleges, professional body etc.

The University is a signatory of the UK concordat to support the career development of researchers (http://www.pdoc.cam.ac.uk/dpccn/ConcordatHRexcellence). The strategic responsibility for RD provision lies with the Researcher Development Executive (RDX) and the Researcher Development Committee (RDC).

There followed discussion a discussion around the following 4 questions.

1.   How do you choose which RD courses/opportunities to join?
2.   How do you judge how to use your time?
3.   Do you use any type of structure or framework to assess your needs?
4.   What would self-assessment look like?

The results of this discussion are presented in Appendix 2 and can be found at http://www.pdoc.cam.ac.uk/dpccn/dpccnminutes/15-10-22DPCCNaccessPPD

It is recognized that the postdoc population is a large and very diverse group with differing levels of experience and potential career paths. However, there was a very clear message that the development and promotion of resources for postdocs to proactively assess and meet their own training needs is needed. The following general themes emerged.

(a) Core value skills
Develop a set of core value skills that all researchers should develop as part of their postdocs in Cambridge. Ensure that adequate training/opportunities are provided for postdocs to develop these core skills. Advertise effectively via a central listing of all courses and opportunities, which is searchable by the core values.

(b) Personalised skills analysis
Opportunity for postdocs to have personalised skills analysis to determine skill level and identify gaps. This could be completed either as a self-assessment exercise, part of SRD, via a Careers Service appointment, via a mentor or peer-to-peer support (note that peer recommendation was a significant factor in attendance at training courses).

(c) Use of Staff Review and Development
Use the Staff Review and Development (SRD) process to identify and collate postdoc training needs. As part of SRD postdocs should identify and record training and development needs. The DPCCN would recommend that annonymised data, on training and development needs be extracted from the SRD process and fed directly into RD and PPD provision.   However, it was recognized that completion of SRD was patchy and hence provision of resources to self-assessment would be necessary.

(d) Self-assessment resources

Finally, there was an overall desire to have clearer guidance on useable self-assessment resources to enable postdocs to assess their own skills and plan future skills development in a more strategic manner. These resources would not only be useful for self-assessment but they could also facilitate conversations between postdocs and their line-manager. Practical resources could include criteria extracted from

- range of fellowship/grant criteria
- further particulars for non academic vacancies

5. **AOB**

Members were reminded of the upcoming postdoc affairs working group and College Affiliations focus group. Invitations will be emailed out separately.

Members were also reminded that details of the DPCCN can be found at
http://www.pdoc.cam.ac.uk/dpccn

End of meeting

Appendix 1: Consultation on the OPdA Mentoring Pilot

Background:

At the inaugural meeting of the DPCCN in May 2014 'access to appropriate and timely mentoring support' was identified as a need by the postdoc community[1].

After a series of small pilots, the OPdA is initiating a University wide mentoring pilot based on a formal academic matching model. The DPCCN considered the proposal at its termly meeting in October 2015 that was attended by representatives of 25 departmental postdoc committees.

Outcome:

Direct input into the design, content, and procedures for the OPdA mentoring pilot.

Consultation:

Karina Prasad outlined the vision for a University Wide Mentoring Pilot based on a formal academic matching model. Members were given background materials on the scheme (attached) and asked to reflect on the questions outlined below.

Q1 Aims of a mentoring scheme.
The vast majority of the attendees said that they would like to have a mentor, who would be able to provide them with advice about their immediate career as well as help them to develop a long-term strategy for their career paths, both inside and outside of their chosen field. In addition, a number of postdocs listed a need for mentoring on specific issues e.g. gender issues, work-life balance etc.

Some of the postdocs identified that a good mentor should be familiar not only with academic research, but also have experience/knowledge outside of academia. The personal qualities and experience of a mentor were also very important e.g. empathy, approachable, confidentiality, understanding of the current research landscape etc.

Q2 Practical issues
In this part of the discussion the postdocs explored possible arrangements that would help a postdoc to find a suitable mentor.

Mentoring is seen as a very important tool for postdoc career progression and should be made available to all postdocs. Some of the groups divided prospective mentors into two possible categories: an academic-senior mentor and peer-to-peer mentoring.

Most of the attendees agreed that, for the scheme described, mentees should apply by a formal application. This could be either at appointment, or after probation when an individual has a specific need and/or a clearer awareness of career paths and choices. There was no unanimous

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[1] http://www.pdoc.cam.ac.uk/dpccn/dpccnminutes

consensus on whether mentors should be allocated on a 'first come, first serve' basis (perceived as more fair) or on the basis of need (given a limited number in pilot).

However, the proposed scheme which requires two years remaining on a contract was problematic as a large number of postdocs are on contracts with less than two years remaining and it can be argued that they are in more need of effective and timely mentoring. In addition, although an individual contract may be for less than two years it is common that contracts are extended. In the case that the extension is less that two years an individual postdoc may remain ineligible despite being in Cambridge for a considerable period of time.

An interesting, but not widespread idea was that a postdoc, with a contract <2 years could sign up and be mentored for 2 years which would straddle their contract in Cambridge and transition to a new position (possibly outside Cambridge).

There was general agreement that a mentee should have a 'choice' in the selection of their mentor and vice-versa. This would also allow postdocs working in a department outside of their field to be matched with a mentor in their core research field.

Q3 Training for mentoring

Most attendees said that they prefer face-to-face training, however, online training could be a workable option, because of its flexibility. A document that clearly sets out the boundaries of a mentoring scheme would be useful for reference for both mentor and mentee.

Q4 Current mentoring experiences whilst in Cambridge.

There were some examples of positive informal mentoring within Cambridge, generally between a PI and a postdoc resulting in a 'mentor-like' relationship. However, the vast majority of attendees did not have a positive experience to share (largely as they didn't have a mentor).

Other themes

There is significant demand for mentoring schemes within departments (e.g. to meet Athena SWAN action plans) and, as a result, small departmental schemes are being initiated across the University. The attendees thought that the OPdA University wide mentoring pilot should be complimentary to the existing schemes i.e. not a replacement. To minimise confusion for the individual postdoc it was suggested that the OPdA mentoring pilot could collate information about existing schemes.

There was a perception that recruitment and training of mentors would require top down support and that the 'mentoring' culture was poor in some departments.

It was recognised that there is a general lack of understanding of mentor-mentee relationships within the postdoc community e.g. confusion exists with induction, buddy systems, coaching, careers advice etc.

Mentoring, as a longer-term developmental relationship between a mentor and mentee, is in

conflict with the short term nature of a postdoc contract.

Proposed Action 1: Hold a DPCCN mentoring education and training session, delivered by PPD. The aims of the session are
(1) Empower an individual postdoc to find/develop his or her own mentoring relationships.
(2) Build a cohort of postdocs who understand mentoring and who can take this new knowledge back to their departments.
Proposed Action 2: Analyse HR data on postdoc contract lengths to assess numbers of postdocs on very short term contracts (less that two years).

Proposed Action 3: Encourage the OPdA to add information on mentoring to the mandatory induction sessions for all new postdocs.

Proposed Action 4: Encourage the OPdA to collate information on existing mentoring schemes and, in collaboration with PPD, provide online training materials for mentoring which are usable for postdocs in other mentoring schemes.

Pre-reading for the Departmental Postdoc Committee Chairs' Network 22 October 2015

MENTORING - PREMEETING SUGGESTED READING

The following materials are provided to get your juices flowing!
1. Introduction to mentoring
2. Preparing for the mentoring relationship (mentor)
3. General Preparation (mentee)
4. Sample mentor/mentee matching form as used at Sheffield University

1 – Introduction to Mentoring

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is a process for helping someone develop in their current job and also for the future.
- A mentor is a person who offers support and guidance to another; an experienced and trusted counsellor or friend (Oxford English Dictionary)
- Mentoring is help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking (Megginson and Clutterbuck, Mentoring in Action)

It is often characterised by:
- Focusing on the overall development and aspirations of the mentee
- The relationship being professional and also, to some extent, personal
- Mentees sharing whatever critical issues impact their professional and personal success.
- Being a long term relationship between the mentor and the mentee
- The employee's manager is not a critical partner in the mentoring process

Through the mentoring process, we would like to promote a culture where:
- all members of staff feel empowered and supported to ask others for mentoring support
- all members of staff feel open to supporting others' development through mentoring
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Our aim is to provide you with all support and resources that you need in order to work with a mentor (and make the most from it).

Who is the Mentoring for?

Mentoring is available to all academic, academic Related and Research staff across the organisation.

A mentor can offer the right kind of support for you if YOU are:
- willing to take responsibility for your goals
- willing to reflect on what you want out of the relationship
- willing to seek out and identify who would be the best mentor for you
- able to commit to driving the relationship forward
And want to learn and develop by working with someone who can:
- provide feedback
- help them find their own solutions, but provide some advice and expertise

- help develop specific skills

How does a mentoring relationship work?

Mentees are encouraged to either find their own mentor or ask their PI/Supervisor to assign someone.

The mentee initiates the first meeting/contact, where they establish whether the mentor would be able to meet the mentees needs. If rapport is established and both parties feel that they can work well together, they can take the conversation further. Initially, establish the boundaries of the relationship, probable length, when and how will they 'meet', ways of working, confidentiality, and most importantly: learning and development objectives.

There is no fixed time that mentoring relationships are expected to last. This is entirely a matter for the mentee and mentor to decide. It often depends on the mentee's needs.

The Purpose of Mentors

Mentors help people learn and develop. Mentoring therefore has the potential to make a valuable contribution to staff in terms of personal and organisational development. It ties in closely with the emphasis we place on personal and professional development, and it promotes knowledge sharing across the organisation.

Benefits for the Learner can include:
- Increased confidence/self-esteem
- Increased sense of value within the organisation
- Help and support
- Safe learning environment (can be open about vulnerabilities)
- Increased understanding of the organisation
- Focus on specific skills (i.e. coaching from the mentor)
- Ideas about career opportunities
- Training in new skills (financial, staff management, committee membership etc)
The benefits are not all one way. Mentors too can gain a sense of value within the organisation as well as satisfaction from passing on their skills and wisdom; also greater understanding of the organisation and its issues and problems, as well as improving one-to-one communication skills, coaching skills and management skills.
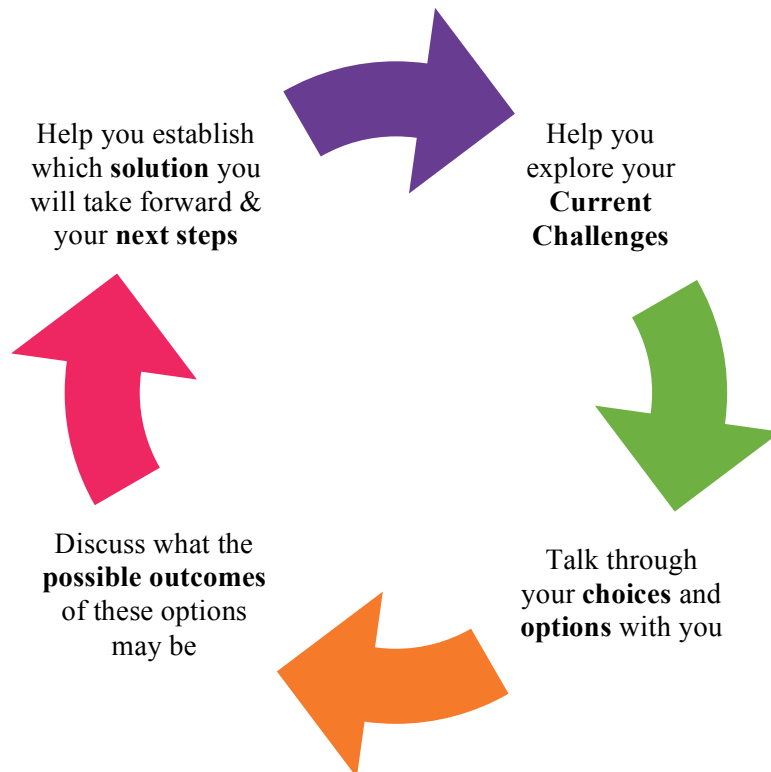
The Role of the Mentor

Mentoring is separate from the line management chain. Your relationship with your mentor should however, benefit your relationship with PI/Supervisor. You can be open with your PI/Supervisor about the fact that you have a mentor if you wish, and you can ask your PI/Supervisor support in identifying development areas that you might want to work with a mentor with. This is however not a requirement and your relationship with your mentor is confidential

Your mentor will not supplant your PI's role or act as an instructor, tutor or personal friend to you.

Instead they will provide an additional resource and complement the relationships you have already developed within and outside the organisation.

Mentors are volunteers. They can be more senior within the organisation (offering wisdom and organisational awareness), or external to the organisation, may offer insights into particular skills and experiences (including project management, change processes or leadership) and they can be from a different affiliate (sharing their knowledge of their affiliate).

Mentors can…

Help you establish which **solution** you will take forward & your **next steps**

Help you explore your **Current Challenges**

Discuss what the **possible outcomes** of these options may be

Talk through your **choices** and **options** with you

A mentor is expected to…
- act as a sounding board
- listen and challenge
- question
- provide professional and personal support
- encourage independent thinking
- keep to boundaries and principles
- encourage their mentee to come up with their own solutions to problems
- coach the mentee to make the most of their talents
- build the mentees self confidence
- act as a role model
- be someone to talk to outside the line management structure
- offer insights into the culture and values of the organisation
- share their experience and expertise
- give feedback
- provide advice where possible and relevant
- indicate additional resources

Your Own Role

The relationship between yourself and your mentor is two-way and you bear equal responsibility for making it work effectively. Both of you will gain and learn from the work you do together and you will decide together how it will work and what you will cover.

As a mentee you are expected to:
- Be prepared to drive the mentoring relationship forward and take ownership of your learning
- Identify your development goals and decide how you will work towards them
- Agree and commit to a schedule of meetings
- Prepare for meetings, and undertake any agreed actions
- Maintain the confidentiality of the relationship

Finding your mentor

1. First of all, you need to be clear in what you'd like the mentor to support you with. Reflect on what you want a mentor to help you with. (see above)

2. Then you can think about:
- Who could provide you with that support?
- Where in the organisation are they?
- What is their knowledge/experience?
- What is their role?
- Who do they work with?

3. How can you find them?
- Maybe you met someone at a course/workshop/conference/event?
- Maybe you have heard about their work/seen something they have written or posted.
- Ask your PI or supervisor/colleagues, if they have any good ideas

4. Create a list of a few people, who you have identified as potential mentors.

5. Once you have some people in mind, please get in touch with them (in your order of priority). The easiest way to do this is to send them an email, in which you outline what you'd like them to support you with (your objectives).

6. If they come back to you to say they would be happy to support you, you can arrange an initial chat, to see if you would like to continue in a mentoring relationship.

2. Preparing for the mentoring relationship

Before you start mentoring someone, it might be helpful for you to reflect on your own mentoring experiences and competence, what are you willing to give, and what would you like to gain. Thinking these through will help you prepare for your first meeting with the Mentee, where you decide if you can both meet each others expectations.

Taking each question in turn, work your way through the questionnaire, drawing on your own experiences. What you write is for your eyes only. **There are no "right answers" - the most important part is for you to think through your answers.**

Q1. Who has enthused and motivated you the most in your life? What specifically made it easy for them to enthuse/motivate you?

Individuals	What made it easy for them to enthuse and motivate you?

Q2. What did you most respect these individuals for?

Q3. Who has had the *least* influence on you (if you can even remember them!)? What caused this?

Individuals	Reasons

Q4. Describe your style as a leader or a manager of others.

Q5. What aspects of being a mentor are you likely to find most easy or difficult? What aspects are you likely to find most or least satisfying?

Easiest aspects:	Most difficult aspects:
Most satisfying aspects?	**Least satisfying aspects**

Q6. What makes you feel ready to be a mentor?

Q7. What do you feel unprepared for?

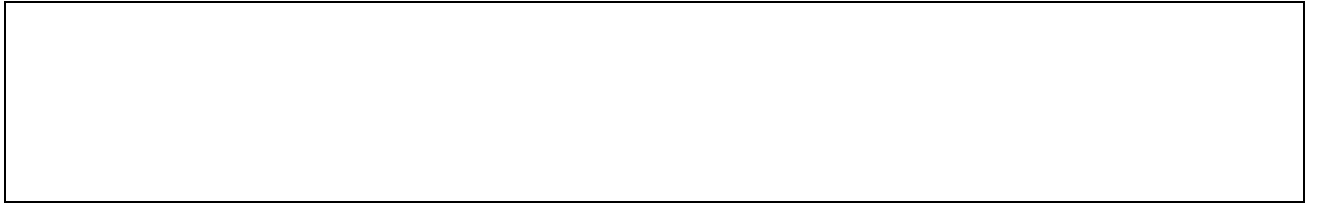**Q8.** What do you personally hope to gain from it?

Q9. What could you do to make sure that you achieve your hopes?

Q10. What anxieties do you have about it?

Q11. What could you do to prevent these fears being realised?

Q12. What can you give to a mentoring relationship?

Q14. What do you need from it?

3. General Preparation (mentee)

Before you start thinking about your objectives from mentoring and about who could help, it is useful to reflect on any previous experience you might have had of being mentored and your hopes for it.

Taking each question in turn, work your way through the questionnaire, drawing on your own experiences. What you write is for your eyes only. **You don't have to write a lot, and there are no "right answers" - the most important part is the thinking.**

Q1. Who has had the most influence on you in your life? What specifically made it easy for them to influence you?

Individuals	What made it easy for them to influence you?

Q2. Who has enthused and motivated you the most in your life? What specifically made it easy for them to enthuse/motivate you?

Individuals	What made it easy for them to enthuse and motivate you?

Q3. What did you most respect these individuals for?

Q4. Who has had the *least* influence on you (if you can even remember them!)? What caused this?

Individuals	Reasons

Q5. Thinking of your answers to the above, what are you looking for in a mentor?

| |
| |

Q6. What aspects of being mentored are you likely to find most easy or difficult? What aspects are you likely to find most or least satisfying?

Easiest aspects:	**Most difficult aspects:**
Most satisfying aspects?	**Least satisfying aspects**

| | |
| | |

Q7. What makes you feel ready to be mentored at this point in your career?

| |
| |

Q8. What do you feel unprepared for?

| |
| |

Q9. What do you personally hope to gain from it?

| |
| |

Q10. What anxieties do you have about it?

| |
| |

Q12. What can you give to a mentoring relationship?

| |
| |

Thinking through what you want from a mentoring relationship

It is important to have thought carefully about your objectives before embarking upon your mentoring relationship. Having clear objectives, and communicating these to your mentor, will ensure that your relationship maintains the focus and drive that it needs to meet your objectives.

A good way to check if your objectives are clear is to ask yourself the following questions.

As before, take each question in turn and work your way through the questionnaire, drawing on your own hopes and aspirations. What you write is for your eyes only but you should be ready to discuss it with your mentor. Again, you don't have to write a lot, and there are no "right answers" – the most important part is the thinking.

Q1. What does success look like for you in the future? (You can describe it in words, pictures or graphics. Be as creative as you can in describing it.)

Q2. What do you need to develop to get there?

Q3. What do you need from your mentor to achieve this? How can they help?

Q4. What are you prepared to give?

Q5. In what ways will you be able to measure your success during your mentoring relationship?

Q6. What results will you be able to see at the end of your mentoring relationship?

It is also essential to revisit your objectives regularly with your mentor to ensure that they are still relevant and that your relationship is still on track to meeting them. We would advise that you revisit your objectives with your mentor every 3-6 months.

If your objectives change or evolve, this is not a sign of failure. Make sure that both you and your mentor are clear on the new objectives and are both happy to work together to help you achieve them.

The section below is intended to you to summarise your thoughts and identify your key priorities. You can just use the headings that are most useful/relevant to you - this is something you can use to share with your mentor when you first contact them, and when you first meet them.

My vision and goals for working with a mentor:

The skills/knowledge/abilities I would most like to develop:

My initial objectives are…:

…in order to:

I will know I am progressing when:

The immediate support/feedback I need is:

4. Sample Matching form from Sheffield University

Researcher Mentoring Programme
Mentee Matching Form 2014

The information given on this form is solely for use in the Mentoring Programme matching process. It will be seen by the programme designer (Dr Kay Guccione) and a copy will be given to the mentor we match you with. You will receive a copy of their mentor details form.

1. **Training Feedback**

WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE OF THE MENTORING TRAINING?					
1 = Very poor // 2 = Poor // 3 = Neither poor nor good // 4 = Good // 5 = Very good					
(i) Workshop content (relevancy)	1	2	3	4	5
(ii) Workshop content (level and pace of learning)	1	2	3	4	5
(iii) Workshop leader (style)	1	2	3	4	5
(iv) Workshop leader (knowledge)	1	2	3	4	5
(v) Discussion with other workshop participants	1	2	3	4	5
(vi) Venue/Organisation	1	2	3	4	5

WHAT DID YOU GAIN FROM THE SESSION?					
1 = Very poor // 2 = Poor // 3 = Neither poor nor good // 4 = Good // 5 = Very good					
(i) I understood what I could expect from the programme	1	2	3	4	5
(ii) I gained knowledge of what mentoring is	1	2	3	4	5
(iii) I gained insights into how I can be an effective mentor/ee	1	2	3	4	5
(iv) I learned useful knowledge of models or processes	1	2	3	4	5
(v) I gained an understanding of how I can work effectively with others	1	2	3	4	5
(vi) I changed my perception of what mentoring is	1	2	3	4	5

2. **Personal Details**

Forename:	Surname:
email:	Telephone:
Contract Start Date:	Contract End Date:
Years post-PhD: (if applicable)	Are you an Allied Health Professional? Area:
Department	Section (ScHARR):

3.   **Career Path / Experience**

What do you enjoy most about your current role in the University?
What do consider to be the challenges/issues/barriers you are currently facing in your current role/career path?   How do you see mentoring helping you with these challenges?
At the end of the mentoring relationship, what broad topic(s) would you like to have achieved with your mentor? Career progression ☐ General support and guidance ☐ Achieving work-life balance ☐ Knowing what I want next in my career ☐ Increased self confidence ☐ Increased self reflection ☐ To have set goals for my professional development ☐ To have set goals for my personal development ☐ Other (please describe) ☐
Please describe in your own words your objectives for the mentoring programme?
What are your long-term career goals?
Please describe your ideal mentor (e.g. skills, attributes, career path, experience, contacts, personality)   Male ☐   Female ☐   No preference ☐
What are your hobbies and interests?

Please let us know any other information about yourself or your expectations of the mentoring programme that you feel will be useful when matching you with a mentor.

The minimum requirement for your mentoring meetings is 3 (~1.5-2h) sessions in a 6 month period. Can you commit to this time?

Yes ☐   No ☐

4.   **Are you interested in applying for a Research Fellowship in the future?**

I'd like general advice on applying for a fellowship in the future ☐

I have a specific fellowship in mind that I'd like to apply for ☐ :

 What is the name/funder of the Fellowship award:

       What is the deadline for the application:

5.   **Expectations – please initial each:**

I understand that **the programme is mentee-driven** and it is my responsibility to make contact with, and respond to my mentor in a timely way.	
I understand that I will be a mentee with **one mentor** assigned to me. The relationship is 1:1, and is **confidential**.	
I understand that providing **prompt feedback** to Kay Guccione at the end of the mentoring programme is an essential part of my responsibility.	
If I feel **uncomfortable or overwhelmed** by any situation, I will contact Kay Guccione for assistance.	
If for any reason I wish to **withdraw from participating** I will contact Kay Guccione to discuss my reasons. Where I cannot, she will inform my mentor.	
I understand that if a mentor is not the right match for me, I can **re-apply for another mentor** in the next round of the programme.	

6.   **Confidentiality:**

I confirm that the details contained within this form are correct and give my permission for this information to be processed as specified above.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please contact Kay Guccione if you have any questions about completing this form.

Appendix 2: Access to Personal and Professional Development Opportunities

The DPCCN has identified "*postdocs have access to personal and professional development opportunities[2]*" as a key priority for 2015/16. This priority was addressed at the termly meeting in October 2015, which was attended by representatives of 25 departmental postdoc committees (appendix 1).

The network already has a good understanding of the issues and challenges affecting postdocs and access to PPD opportunities. This is based on previous discussions of the DPCCN and from the rolling review of RD provision across the University (extract of **RDC.15.05**, appendix 2).

Desired Outcome:
  • Gain a better understanding on how postdocs currently assess and meet their researcher development needs.
  • Generate ideas from the postdoc community on how the University could better support identification and provision for RD needs.

Consultation:

Members were given background materials on Researcher Development at Cambridge and asked to reflect on the questions outlined below.

1. <u>How do you decide on which course(s)/training opportunities to attend during the year?</u>

   The majority of attendees self-assess their own researcher development needs. **In order of frequency** the following sources of information are used as part of their self-assessment.

   (1) General 'gut' feeling that course would be useful.
   (2) Recommended by a postdoc colleague.
   (3) Other* (see below).

   (4) Informal encouragement by line manager.
   (5) Recommended by Careers advisor.
   (6) Formal encouragement by line manager (via SRD).
   (7) Encouraged by mentor.

Note: (1), (2) and (3) are significantly larger than (4)-(7)

Other* includes information gained by 2 main approaches

Firstly, a proactive approach. Training courses are sought in response to
- funding body grant application criteria,
- information provided in 'further particulars' of vacancies and outcome of job interviews,

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[2] Personal and professional development opportunities refers to the complete topic of 'Researcher Development' and not simply courses and opportunities offered via PPD.

- a prerequisite for some teaching,
- self assessment using Vitae RDF.

Secondly, a reactive approach. Training courses are booked in response to effective and timely publicity via email newsletters and bulletins e.g. "if the course looks interesting/entertaining and I have time in my diary I book it".

2. Do you use any type of development framework or information about career pathways to plan your development?

Attendees were aware of a number of potential formal 'frameworks' that were available.   However, there is little evidence that these are used in a strategic manner. These include Vitae RDF, MRC personal development plan, information from IMechE, IChemE, IOP, CSci

More commonly, development gaps were identified via
- grant/fellowship/job application forms
- comparison with peers and successful postdocs
- external advice – SRD, Careers

3. What would you advise the University to put in place for you to assess your training needs?

It is recognized that the postdoc population is a large and very diverse group with differing levels of experience and potential career paths. However, there was a very clear message that the development and promotion of resources for postdocs to proactively assess and meet their own training needs is needed. The following general themes emerged.

(a) Core value skills
Develop a set of core value skills that all researchers should develop as part of their postdocs in Cambridge. Ensure that adequate training/opportunities are provided for postdocs to develop these core skills. Advertise effectively via a central listing of all courses and opportunities, which is searchable by the core values.

(b) Personalised skills analysis
Opportunity for postdocs to have personalised skills analysis to determine skill level and identify gaps. This could be completed either as a self-assessment exercise, part of SRD, via a Careers Service appointment, via a mentor or peer-to-peer support (note that peer recommendation was a significant factor in attendance at training courses).

(c) Use of Staff Review and Development
Use the Staff Review and Development (SRD) process to identify and collate postdoc training needs. As part of SRD postdocs should identify and record training and development needs. The DPCCN would recommend that annonymised data, on training and development needs be extracted from the SRD process and fed directly into RD and PPD provision.   However, it was recognized that completion of SRD was patchy and hence provision of resources to self-assessment would be necessary.

(d) Self-assessment resources

Finally, there was an overall desire to have clearer guidance on useable self-assessment resources to enable postdocs to assess their own skills and plan future skills development in a more strategic manner. These resources would not only be useful for self-assessment but they could also facilitate conversations between postdocs and their line-manager. Practical resources could include criteria extracted from

- range of fellowship/grant criteria
- further particulars for non academic vacancies

Pre-reading for the Departmental Postdoc Committee Chairs' Network 22 October 2015

"Access to Personal and Professional Development Opportunities"

BACKGROUND READING

A review of Researcher Development provision across the University is currently underway. This review is led by the Researcher Development Committee.

Researcher Development is designed to provide added value to the personal and professional development of researchers by educating researchers in areas that are not normally explicitly covered in their day to day working environment. This would include

- The need to take responsibility for one's own career development and formulate a strategic plan.
- Communication skills: written and verbal, formal and informal (including networking and teaching in a discipline-specific and general context).
- Working with others: teamwork, leadership, management (including self-management) and entrepreneurship.
- Selling: selling a research proposition to get funding, applying for jobs.
- Material that is specific to location or discipline: specific knowledge that is of value for people working in Cambridge (including induction and making effective use of the staff review system); transferable skills that are relevant to the academic discipline of the researcher.
Researcher Development is provided at central level (e.g. Personal and Professional Development and the Careers Service) as well as delivery at School and departmental level.

A series of small postdoc focus groups have already been held earlier this year to get an insight into the views and experiences of postdocs and identified the following issues.

OUTCOME FROM POSTDOC FOCUS GROUPS (taken from RDC.15.05)

The groups were asked to reflect on their experiences with researcher development education at the University of Cambridge and in particular to reflect on issues in relation to the relevance and accessibility of this type of education. In their final round of discussions the focus groups were asked for suggestions on practical measures and/or initiatives that would make the current delivery more relevant to the respective target group, facilitate better access and increase participation.

The participants of all focus groups strongly agreed that researcher development education is vital to career advancement. In summary, the key issues that emerged from these discussions included the following:

- Soft transferable skills training deserved special attention both in terms of optimising the provision by including interactive and on the job training components and by facilitating better access. The terminology needs to be changed given that the term "soft transferable skills" does not resonate well with the target group and those who need to provide their support.
- Acknowledging career pathways, identifying related competencies and structuring the curriculum accordingly was highly recommended.
- Early access to guidance from career counsellors would be valuable in developing a good understanding of the various career options and would assist in identifying career development

needs early on. This would allow for timely follow up through a tailored professional development plan.

- Key barriers to participation included:
o Lack of support from the PI and lack of leverage of the postdoc (in particular
o an issue in relation to soft skills training and induction events). It should be noted that the OPdA has recently taken on responsibility for postdoc induction events and HR have agreed to make these events mandatory to attend.
o Physical barriers to participation when postdocs are based in West Cambridge or at the Addenbrooke's site.
o Course eligibility criteria for teaching courses that are formulated as such that they exclude people on the basis of the duration of their postdoc, e.g. if it is only a one year position and on the basis of no prior experience.
o Communication of the offerings and available courses; in that it is often not clear to the recipient which provision is relevant to them at which part of their career and where it is being delivered.
o There is a recurring problem with courses that are oversubscribed that is an issue for both postdocs and doctoral students.
- Postdocs could be given more leverage in discussions with their PI's if they had a contractual entitlement and a certain number of allocated days allowing them to participate in researcher development education.
- In relation to the previously identified gaps in provision (i.e. Ethics and Integrity, Grant writing, Financial Management and IP and Impact) the participants agreed that formal training in these areas would be of importance to them.
- A further significant gap in delivery highlighted by the focus group discussions is teaching training. There was strong agreement that the current provision is lacking in the area of lecturing education and training. This is a serious issue for many postdocs given that this type of experience is instrumental to their successful career advancement.
- Other suggestions included a properly embedded mentoring programme and a leadership programme that would be broadly accessible to all postdocs. The mentoring programme, provided that the mentors are properly trained, could fill an important void in postdoc career development and support.