

Postdoctoral Awards

*Recognising Excellence in Research,
Teaching and Academic Citizenship.*





Tim Minshall

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Head of the Institute for Manufacturing

Postdoctoral Awards at the Institute for Manufacturing

Importance

"We were absolutely delighted to be able to trial a new initiative that recognised the outstanding and diverse contributions made by the postdoctoral community."

Process

"It was very important that the approach taken was fair and transparent, but not overly complex and burdensome to administer. The feedback from those involved in this pilot scheme demonstrated that it is possible to deliver a simple and efficient process that had significant impact. Discussions since completion of the pilot have shown that the 'operating procedures' for this scheme should be reasonably simple to package and handover for delivery in other parts of the University."

Impact

"I was delighted to see the impact that the running of this pilot scheme had on our community within the Institute for Manufacturing, but also how positive reports of this pilot were picked up across the wider University. Another positive impact was seeing how the postdoctoral community themselves were able to initiate, design and support the delivery of this scheme with such enthusiasm and effectiveness."

1. Background

The University has a number of award schemes for staff and students that recognise their contributions. However, postdocs are largely not eligible to apply for most of these schemes, and if eligible, postdocs' success is negligible compared to students and other staff categories. There is a consensus among the members of the Postdoc Chairs' Network (PCN), that an award scheme dedicated to postdocs is very much needed. With full support from the Head of the Institute for Manufacturing (IfM) Prof Tim Minshall, a pilot scheme of Postdoctoral Awards was carried out at IfM. Dr Tariq Masood, former PCN chair, states that *"the IfM Postdoctoral Awards scheme is a fantastic initiative which shows commitment from the IfM leadership towards recognition, growth and career development of postdoctoral researchers"*. The lessons learnt through this trial are presented in this document to provide the basis for other divisions, departments and schools to establish such an award scheme.

2. Nomination Process

The nomination process has been designed to be fast and fuss-free. The information and nomination form was made available through the IfM Intranet containing the following information.

2.1 Rules and Eligibility

The IfM Postdoctoral Awards are open to all Research Assistants¹, Research Associates, Senior Research Associates and Principal Research Associates at the IfM who meet the award criteria.

2.2 Administration

The awards are managed by the IfM Awards Committee which includes 4 IfM members of staff (no postdocs or contract researchers) from a variety of research teams and roles. The committee is responsible for soliciting and evaluating nominations on an annual basis and selecting the recipients of the IfM Postdoctoral Awards from the pool of qualified nominees.

¹ The IfM Postdoctoral Awards are open to Research Assistants who have passed their PhD viva voce at the time of nomination.

2.3 Nomination and Submission Information

Any member of IfM staff can nominate Research Assistants, Research Associates, Senior Research Associates or Principal Research Associates for an award. Self-nominations are not permitted. In addition, the IfM Awards Committee can also nominate candidates at committee meetings. The next deadline for nominations is 01 October 2019. No late submissions will be accepted. The nomination form (see appendix x) has to be sent to Liz Gander. The following nomination information is required:

1. Nominee and Nominator Information

Full name, role, email address.

2. Category of IfM Postdoctoral Award

Research, Teaching, or Academic Citizenship.

3. Nominator Statement

Summarise the achievements upon which the nomination is based. This should be a short statement of maximum 500 words describing how the nominee meets the award criteria. This can include a list of publications (Research Award), a list of teaching activities (Teaching Award), or a list of roles and responsibilities (Academic Citizenship Award) of the nominee. However, these lists should always be combined with a number of examples explaining how the nominee meets the award criteria.

2.4 Award Categories and Criteria

The award will be given to Research Assistants, Research Associates, Senior Research Associates and Principal Research Associates who demonstrate excellence in research, teaching or academic citizenship within the University. The nominee has to be exceptional in the category he/or she is nominated for. Each award category includes but is not limited to the criteria listed below.

Category: Research

- The nominee demonstrates excellent research skills (relevant to career stage), which is evident through academic publications.
- The nominee demonstrates excellent research skills (relevant to career stage), which is evident through industry/policy relevant dissemination activities.
- The nominee contributes to grant applications or has successfully applied for a grant on his/her own.

Category: Teaching

- The nominee demonstrates excellence in teaching and/or supporting learning.
- The nominee influences practice to promote excellence in learning and teaching.
- The nominee enhances the student learning experience by using imaginative ways of teaching.
- The nominee makes a significant contribution to innovation in curriculum design, assessment, or teaching delivery.

Category: Academic Citizenship

- The nominee significantly contributes to the IfM community which includes duties, responsibilities, and activities that are not directly research or teaching related.
- The nominee is engaged, collegial, and demonstrates collaborative participation in the activities of the IfM.
- The nominee demonstrates an awareness of the institution's strategic goals and actively contributes to their achievement.

2.5 Equality and Diversity

The IfM Awards Committee is committed to providing a fair environment that embodies and promotes equality of opportunity concerning the IfM Postdoctoral Awards. The nominees are judged relative to their career stage, taking into consideration their form of employment (full-time, part-time, etc.).

2.6 Prize

The recipient of the IfM Postdoctoral Award receives £250 and a free ticket to the IfM Christmas dinner.

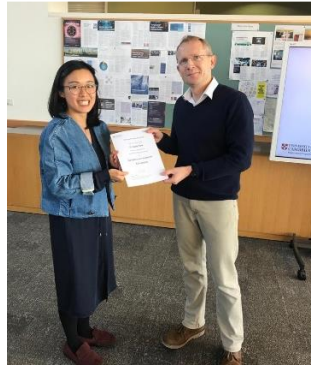
3. Selection Process

The IfM Awards Committee received 28 nominations in total. Table below provides an overview of all nominations. The committee evaluated all nominations and selected 6 winners in total (research: 2, teaching: 1, academic citizenship: 3).

	Research	Teaching	Academic Citizenship
Number of Nominations received	4	1	23
Number of Nominees	4	1	13

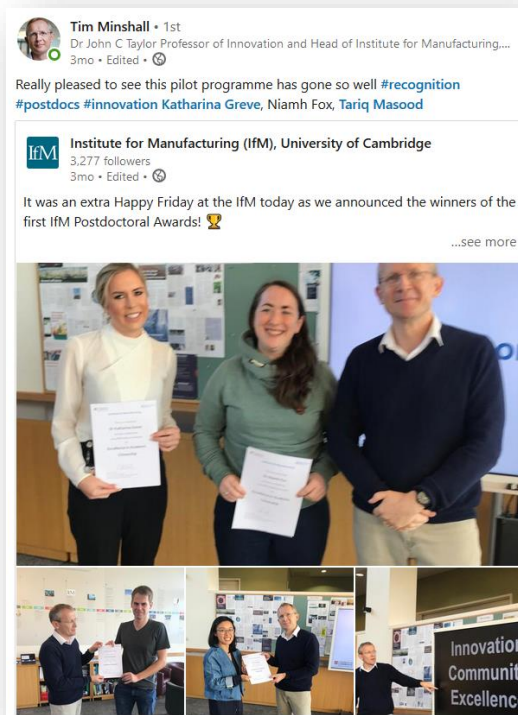
4. Announcement of the Winners

The winners were announced by Head of the IfM, Prof Tim Minshall, at a ceremony held in the IfM Common Room on 18 October 2019.



Dr Curie Park explains that *“the academic citizenship award came as a pure surprise. The fact that the IfM colleagues from my beloved research community voted for me to receive this award is a great honour [...]. This recognition indeed strengthened my sense of belonging, and made my pursuit of conducting impactful research welcomed and valued.”*

The IfM Postdoctoral Awards received attention on Social Media, ...



... on the IfM Website,

The screenshot shows the IfM website's news section. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Study at Cambridge', 'About the University', and 'Research at Cambridge'. Below this is the IfM logo and a search bar. A secondary navigation bar includes links for 'About IfM', 'Research', 'Education', 'Knowledge transfer', 'People', 'Insights', 'Events', 'News', and 'Department of Engineering'. The main content area features a news article titled 'IfM announce winners of University's first Postdoctoral Awards', dated 18 October 2019. The article includes a photo of six winners and a list of names: Thomas Bohné, Katharina Greve, Niamh Fox, Curie Park, Lili Jia, and Daniel Summerbell. A sidebar on the left contains a 'News' menu with options like 'IfM Review', 'Insights', and a 'News archive' with years from 2012 to 2019. Social sharing buttons for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are visible at the bottom of the article.

... and by the Vice-Chancellor Prof Stephen Toope.



Photo: Postdoc Groups' Celebration 2019

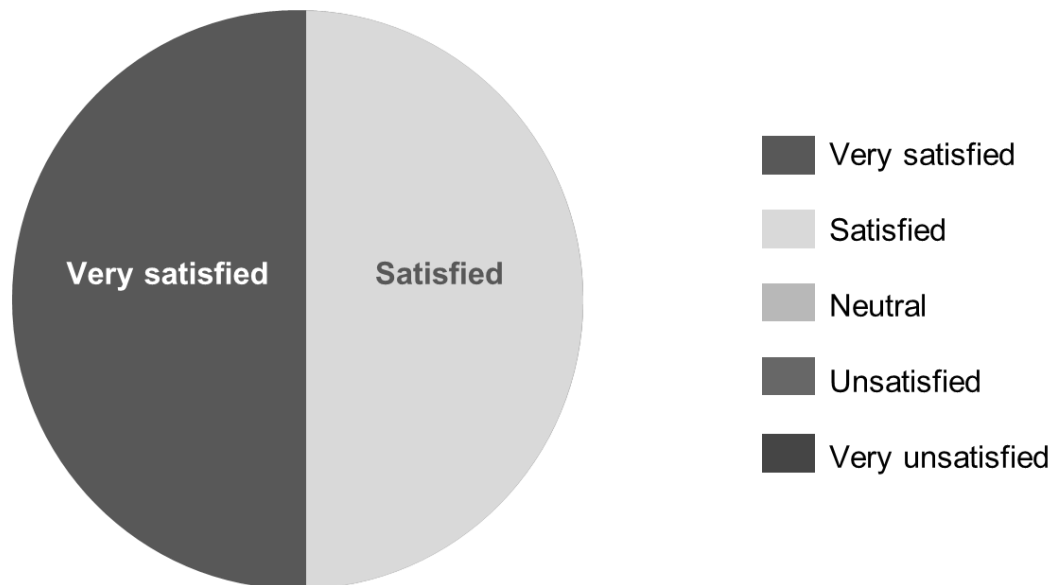
As part of the Postdoc Groups' Celebration in October 2019, the Postdoctoral Awards pilot scheme was presented to the Vice-Chancellor Prof Stephen Toope as well as to the Pro-Vice-Chancellors Professor Chris Abell, Professor David Cardwell and Professor Andy Neely.

5. Feedback & Suggestions

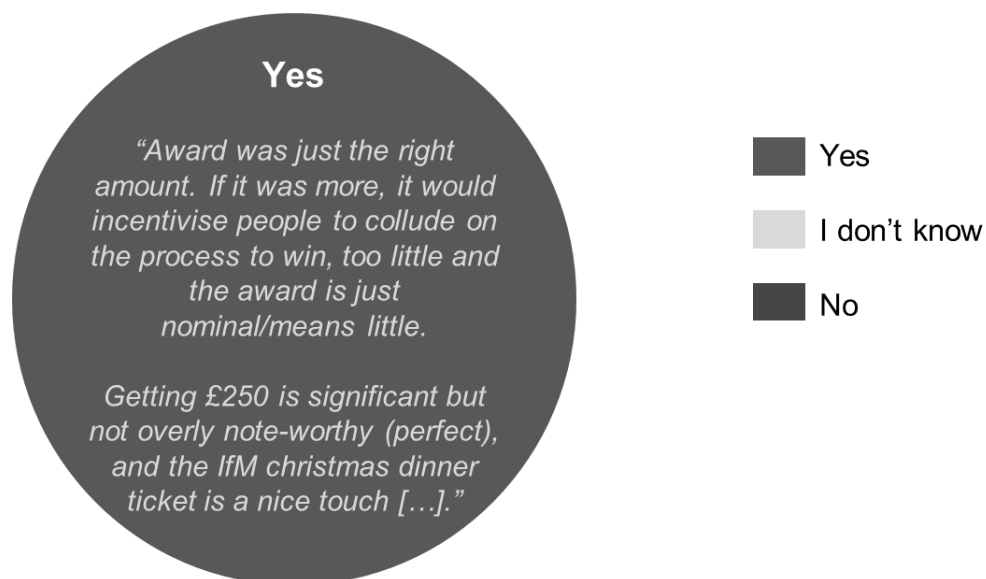
Following the pilot in 2019, feedback from the IfM Awards Committee as well as nominators was gathered as a basis to further improve the scheme in the future.

5.1 Nominator Feedback

Overall, how satisfied were you with the nomination process?



Do you think the prize (£250 + IfM Christmas dinner ticket) was appropriate?



What did you like about the 2019 Postdoctoral Awards Pilot scheme?

- *“It **raises awareness** of the work post-doctoral and contract researchers do in research, teaching and community activities, and their key role in the IfM, the Engineering Dept and the University of Cambridge.”*
- *“The concept is great and the **nomination process easy**.”*
- *“It offered the flexibility to **value a broad range of postdoc activities**.”*
- *“It is an excellent initiative that should be considered for a **broader roll-out in the department**.”*

What did you dislike about the 2019 Postdoctoral Awards Pilot scheme?

- 50% of respondents said **“nothing”!**
- *“It was still difficult to make a **difference between the categories** and also the selection process seemed slightly opaque.”*
- *“I think it would be great if when you announced the winners you also **announced 'runner ups'/'close calls'** and also gave a comprehensive list of all those nominated. Perhaps even allow the nominees to ask to **see what was written on their nomination form** (if those who sent it in are happy of course).”*
- *“**Allow students and other university staff** to submit nominations.”*

5.2 Awards Committee Feedback

- *“We thought that the categories were good and in many cases the evidence presented was in a clear and structured format. We did not receive many applications in the teaching category so we might want to provide a more **detailed explanation of what can be taken into account in this category and considered to be 'teaching'**.”*
- *“There were **some issues around certain applications, which were too short and didn't really provide the detail** to undertake a thorough assessment. If there is anything to do to make it clearer to those nominating that, if they are serious in their nomination, they need to address all of the key criteria in sufficient detail to allow the committee to more easily make its evaluation, that would be great.”*

5.3 Suggestions to improve the scheme

- Define categories better (e.g. what constitutes teaching).
- Ask nominators to comment on specific selection criteria (instead of free text only).
- Set-up online nomination form (instead of PDF form).
- Give nominators the option to specify whether his/her nomination will be shared with the nominee (after results are announced) – regardless of the outcome.
- Make students and staff from other divisions/departments eligible to nominate an IfM Postdoc.
- Provide more transparency about the selection process.
- Announce winners and share a short description about why they have received the award.
- Improve Equality and Diversity aspects (e.g. refining the E&D statement in the nomination form; ensuring diverse staff is represented on the Awards Committee).

Outcomes and recommendations of the IfM Postdoctoral Awards' pilot scheme have been communicated to the University's Postdoctoral Matter Committee (PMC) and the Postdoc Chairs' Network (PCN). Furthermore, information about the scheme have been included in the institutional Race Equality Charter application.

According to the IfM website:

“The awards scheme was a great success and something the IfM will be running again in 2020.”

Appendices

Appendix 1 Nomination Form 2019



Nomination Form

Nominator Details

Please provide your details.

Title	First Name	Last Name

Role	Email Address

Nominee Details

Please provide details of the person you are nominating for an award.

Title	First Name	Last Name

Role	Email Address

Award Category

Please tick the appropriate award category for which you would like to nominate someone.

Research	Teaching	Academic Citizenship

Summary

Please explain, in no more than 500 words, how your nominee demonstrates excellence in the respective award category you are nominating him/her for.

Please email the completed nomination form (subject line: "IfM Postdoctoral Awards Nomination") to [Liz Gander](#).

Questions or Comments?

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