Annual Report 2017/2018
The Postdocs of Cambridge (PdOC) Society

Contact

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Background

There are more than 4,000 postdocs (Research Associates, Senior Research Associates, Junior Research Fellows and other titles) associated with the University of Cambridge, a number which has approximately doubled over the last 15 years. This is a diverse and international group of people which delivers the bulk of the University’s research output, striving to succeed with limited tenure. Although the postdoc community is very heterogeneous, there are still numerous interests and issues in common to all postdocs.

The Postdocs of Cambridge (PdOC) Society was originally founded in 2001 and held its first Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 2012. Since May 2014, the Society has had an office in the Postdoc Centre at 16 Mill Lane where it is co-located with the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPdA) and Newcomers and Visiting Scholars (NVS) Society. The Society is a senior University society and the Research Staff Association (RSA) for the University of Cambridge.

The Society is governed by a Management Committee currently consisting of 16 members and the head of the Accommodation Service acting as our Senior Treasurer. The Management Committee is elected each year at the AGM which usually takes place in June. Separate subcommittees and working groups deal with Events, Communications and Marketing, Finances, Policy and Representation, College Affiliations, and Researcher Development, respectively. The Society is supported by the University which provides access to office, meeting and event facilities in the Postdoc Centres at Eddington, Mill Lane and the Biomedical Campus. The Society also has administrative and strategic support from the Postdoctoral Staff Coordinator and Postdoc Societies Administrator at the OPdA.
Membership

The Society is open to all postdocs associated or affiliated with the University of Cambridge, its Colleges and University Partner Institutes (UPI). Postdocs include all contract research staff who have completed or are finishing their doctorate but do not have long-term tenure or established positions. The Society recognises that the term postdoc is sometimes hard to define and strives to be as inclusive as possible.

Aims of the Society

I. Represent postdocs from all Faculties, Schools and Departments at the University of Cambridge and University Partner Institutions (UPIs).
II. Facilitate communication and networking between postdocs both within the Departments and across Faculties and the wider University community.
III. Provide information and support so that postdocs can make the most of their time at Cambridge.
IV. Create a social and intellectual network for postdocs throughout the University.

The Society pursues these aims in a spirit of inclusivity, democracy, approachability and active engagement.

Representation and Impact

The Society strives to represent the needs of postdocs at appropriate levels of decision-making within the University. Society Committee members represent postdocs on a number of University Committees and the Society recruits postdocs from the community to serve on other University Committees as the need arises.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Committee</th>
<th>PdOC Committee representative</th>
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<tr>
<td>Postdoctoral Matters Committee</td>
<td>Paul Coxon &amp; Tariq Masood</td>
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<td>By appointment by the General Board on nomination of the Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postdoctoral Coordination Group</td>
<td>Paul Coxon &amp; Lori Turner</td>
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<td>Pensions Working Group</td>
<td>Arne Jungwirth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Researcher Development Committee</td>
<td>Marta Costa &amp; Charlie Morgan</td>
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<td>Equality and Diversity Committee</td>
<td>Joanna Waldie</td>
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<td>Accommodation Syndicate</td>
<td>Arne Jungwirth</td>
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<td>Staff Support Services Group</td>
<td>Joanna Waldie</td>
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<td>Careers Service Syndicate</td>
<td>Teresa Almeida</td>
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<td>Research Policy Committee</td>
<td>Marta Costa</td>
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Annual and Extraordinary General Meetings
The Society held an AGM in June 2017 at King’s College at which a new Committee was elected (see below), the Committee reported on the last year’s activities and the plans for the year ahead.

Departmental Postdoc Committee Chairs Network
The PdOC Society chairs the ‘Departmental Postdoc Committee Chairs’ Network’ (DPCCN). This network, established in May 2014 in collaboration with the OPdA, brings together the chairs (or representatives) from departmental postdoc committees across the University with the aim of providing a representative voice for postdocs and providing support and training for postdocs who organise departmental postdoc groups. The membership of the DPCCN has increased to 88 this year, including the 16 PdOC Committee members.

The DPCCN keeps an updated list of postdoc priorities as identified by representatives of the various departmental postdoc committees. The identified priorities are explored in depth at the termly DPCCN meetings and the outcomes reported to the Postdoc’toral Matters Committee, the PdOC Society Committee and any other relevant committees e.g. the Researcher Development Committee and Human Resources Committee.

During 2017-18, the network held meetings on postdoc priorities related to industrial engagement and impact and their relation to research careers with PVC Enterprise and Business Relations, Prof. Andy Neely; and postdoc wellbeing and family support with the Head of University Childcare Services Sue Davis, Equality Champion for AHSS, Dr. Michael Ramage, and Jane Luzio, Director of Newcomers & Visiting Scholars, at which meeting the results of the postdoc families survey conducted by PdOC Welfare Officer, Joanna Waldie, were also presented.

Jointly with the PdOC Society, the network submitted a paper to the Postdoctoral Matters Committee on the recognition and evaluation of support for Researcher Development in Academic Progression and Promotion as part of the University’s current restructuring of senior academic promotions. The paper was well received and there will be ongoing postdoc input into the development of the new Academic Career Pathways system.

The final meeting of the year focused on reviewing the postdoc needs previously identified and discussing priority areas of action for the coming year. These may include the forthcoming University review of researcher promotions and recognition, surveying visiting research staff working in University departments but not employed by the University itself, access to researcher development funding at Departmental and School level, and ways to respond to the publication in early 2019 of the new Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

External representation
The Society values its contacts and collaboration with other RSAs in the UK through the UK Research Staff Association which is supported by Vitae. Alexia Cardona currently acts as the East of England representative in the UKRSA Committee.
The Society is an active member of a recently created European Network of Postdoctoral Associations (ENPA), which aims to represent postdoctoral scientists working in Europe and advocate on their behalf for the improvement of working conditions and career development opportunities. This year, Marta Costa acted as the PdOC representative in ENPA.

College affiliations
The Colleges at the University of Cambridge offer an interdisciplinary environment where students, researchers and academics from different fields come together as a community. Throughout the different surveys and discussions with Postdocs, College affiliation has always been one of the most important issues that Postdocs feel the University should address. In October 2016 the Society developed a proposed strategy on how the Society can support Postdocs to overcome three central thresholds to becoming integrated into the collegiate community:

1. Creating awareness of postdoctoral College affiliations and supporting Postdocs who apply for these, e.g. advertising College Affiliations on the newsletter; the guide to College affiliations on our website.
2. Encouraging Colleges to increase the number and improving the quality of College affiliations for Postdocs by talking to Colleges in various fora.
3. Supporting Colleges to improve integration of Postdocs after they are affiliated by e.g. working with the OPdA initiative of a College postdoc representative network and contacts with Colleges.

The latest statistics compiled by the OPdA show that the number of postdoctoral College affiliations increased by 3% from June 2017 to about 28% of all Postdocs. We worked on other projects this year, including the Postdoc Calendar project - a central resource where Postdocs can see the different events organised by the different Postdoc groups and Colleges across Cambridge. This will enable Postdocs to know about events organised in the different Colleges. We also worked with the Institute of Continuing Education and in May 2018 we organised the PdOC Spring Feast at Madingley Hall which though is not a College in itself, its’ beautiful buildings and gardens provide the opportunity of organising formal halls similarly to those organised in Colleges. The Society will continue to work towards postdoctoral College affiliations being an option for all Postdocs.

Communications and Marketing
The Society complements the University’s infrastructure by ensuring information is disseminated regarding careers and professional development opportunities, College affiliations and social and welfare provisions. The priority of the Society is to ensure that all postdocs throughout the University and UPIs have access to relevant information and networking opportunities. The Society sends out a weekly newsletter which provides information on PdOC events, University training courses and careers services, College affiliations and teaching opportunities, as well University interest-based hobby groups and external events and issues of interest.

The PdOC website provides a central location for a wealth of information for postdocs, including guides for new and established researchers regarding how to obtain advice on travel, professional development and careers, pensions, immigration information, volunteering, teaching, College affiliation, health, welfare and safety. In addition, the website contains information, minutes, papers
and membership details for the DPCCN. A recent addition to the website in the past year is the PdOC blog. This provides regularly updated articles to disseminate highlights and information from the Society and its members, from postdoc representation in University Committees, to social activities and networking events. The Society also uses social media to engage with postdoctoral researchers and the wider community through the PdOC Facebook page and the PdOC Twitter page.

As of June 2018, the PdOC Society sends its weekly newsletter to a mailing list of over 2,228 (1% increase since June 2017), there are over 2,360 followers on Facebook (12% increase since June 2017) and more than 2050 twitter followers (36% increase since June 2017).

The society’s principle marketing strategy at this time is awareness –primarily to make more postdocs aware of the Society as opposed to the intricate details of what we can offer. To achieve this, we have made changes to the use of our logo and ‘identity’ so that they are more visible to others on our print and online media and our social networking accounts. We have made changes to our postdoc guide and will shortly be replacing our flyers and event banners to make these more up-to-date. The next stage is to make ourselves more visible at events we both host and attend. The ultimate outcome of this is to reach a greater proportion of the postdoc community so we can offer support when they need us the most.

Recent initiatives

- **Letter to Faculties – Regent House**

  The PdOC Society believes that all postdocs holding appointments at the University should have a voice within the University as a member of the Regent House, its governing body; currently, only those at some Faculties (or non-Faculty institutions) hold this privilege, along with the small fraction who are Fellows of Colleges. In previous years, the Society carried out lobbying activities, including letter-writing campaigns to various Faculties and a submission to the University's ongoing governance review. Although not a direct result of PdOC action, Society members should be aware that a recent amendment to a Grace relating to Regent House membership is in process (dated 18th April) which, if accepted, will include all Research Associates and Senior Research Associates on the Roll. This is likely to go to a ballot of the Regent House, perhaps with counter-amendments proposed; we await an update from the University Council.

- **National Postdoc Meeting – September 2017**

  Adina Feldman and Paul Coxon from the Society Committee participated in the Royal Society’s ‘Research Culture and the Future of Science’ conference in September 2016 and a follow-up workshop in April 2017. Based on the discussions at these meeting the idea of organising a National Postdoc Meeting in Cambridge was born, this happened in September 2017. The meeting was the first of its kind in the UK and coincided with National Postdoc Appreciation week in the U.S. It brought together more than 80 postdocs from multiple disciplines and 16 different institutions from around the country to meet and network with each other and invited guests and speakers. It was sponsored by Science and Science Careers, RCUK, OPdA, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Babraham Institute. The final panel of the meeting, co-sponsored by the OPdA, included speakers from BBSRC, MRC, Wellcome Trust, Imperial College London and the Royal Society.
The primary aim of the meeting was to discuss postdoc views on researcher development and support with reference to the review of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. The findings were submitted to the Expert Review Panel conducting the review, which includes major funders, policy makers and other stakeholders. In summary these were that:

1) Funders and employers should communicate the existence of the Concordat and its contents to researchers more directly and clearly so they are empowered to seek support and make informed choices about their career development;
2) Researchers should be included in the formulation as well as the on-going revision and evaluation of the Concordat at both institutional and national level in order to guarantee full ownership of their career development responsibilities;
3) While researchers have a clear responsibility for their own career development, this should be balanced with more emphasis on the role and responsibilities of line managers (supervisors, principal investigators); funders and employers should ensure clear expectations and appropriate support for both researchers and line managers alike to enhance researchers’ career development;
4) Appraisals for researchers and line managers should take account respectively of career development activity and how career development is being managed and supported as one important mechanism of embedding and evaluating the aims of a revised Concordat;
5) Career development opportunities should be clearly linked to the strategic needs of current and future employers, for researchers’ own benefit and so that the investment in their skills and training will support innovation and expertise that benefits the economy and society generally;
6) Stronger incentives for and clearer monitoring of the implementation of the Concordat would support better outcomes for researchers, employers and funders.

- **Report on the Postdoc Experience for the Vice-Chancellor**
  The Society submitted the report “The Postdoc Experience at Cambridge” to the Vice-Chancellor in March 2017. The report was based on a survey which received over 60 responses.

- **Survey on Visa/NHS Fees**
  The society ran a survey in April 2017 to investigate the impact of immigration costs (visa, NHS fees, and relocation costs) for non-EU postdocs which had 70 responses. We prepared a report based on the data with a set of recommendations, which was presented to senior university officials. This report was used as a source of information in a discussion that led to the implementation of an interest-free visa loan scheme that supports current and prospective staff and their dependants on the Tier 2 visa route for up to £8k.

- **Survey on North West Cambridge (NWC; Eddington) experience**
  The society ran a survey in February 2018 to investigate peoples’ evaluation of NWC. The aim was to get a general overview of how postdocs (and others) viewed their experiences of applying for, moving to, and living in Eddington. On the basis of the responses we received (52), we engaged with the University’s Accommodation Syndicate and subsequently with the North West Cambridge Development Team (NWCD). We will publish a summary of the survey’s findings, a response by NWCD, and the (anonymised) raw data shortly via our website.
Events and Activities

The PdOC Society organises social, networking and researcher development events to enhance intellectual and social interaction between postdocs from different disciplines. During the period 1 June 2016 to 31 May 2017 the Society provided over 1,200 spaces for postdocs at these events, from which around 500 are recurring events. (N.B. this figure does not include attendances at meetings of the Committee, subcommittees, working groups and DPCCN).

Social and Networking activities

The PdOC Society has a track record of providing a range of vibrant social activities for Cambridge postdocs. During the past year activities have increased in number and range; from the ever-popular College dinners, walking and hiking trips, to pub, games and film nights, to family-friendly events. The PdOC social and networking events are at the heart of the Society. Since the majority of postdocs are excluded from Collegiate Cambridge, the Society plays an essential role in providing opportunities to meet and socialise with postdocs from all academic disciplines. A particular highlight each year is the annual PdOC Garden Party at Emmanuel College that is generously supported by the Master of Emmanuel College and the annual Christmas Dinner which was at Fitzwilliam College in 2017. Through these interactions we hope to further increase the visibility of postdocs to the Colleges and highlight what the postdoctoral community can bring to Collegiate Cambridge. A new focus for the last two years has been a significantly increased number of small scale informal social events around Cambridge.

- **Weekly and monthly recurring social events**
  These include monthly pub nights (at rotating venues across the city), games nights (a fixture at the Mill Lane Postdoc Centre) and film nights (showing classic films), yoga classes, and semi-regular restaurant nights.

- **Hikes**
  There have been two hikes in the past year: a hiking trip to the Brecon Beacons National Park (August 2017), and more recently a trip to the North York Moors (May 2018).

- **College dinners**
  This past year we have arranged the Christmas dinner at Fitzwilliam College, and a second dinner at Fitzwilliam College in June 2018. We also arranged smaller dinners at Corpus Christi (Leckhampton)

- **Day trips**
  These have included trips to Giffords Hall Vineyard (May 2017), Wimbledon (July 2017), the St Albans Christmas Market (December 2017) and a trip to London to watch a ballet performance (May 2018).

- **Special events**
  This year we have organised a visit some cultural events such as a tour of the Fitzwilliam museum (October 2017), Piano Recital with Lazlo Stacho at Corpus Christi chapel (January 2018), some networking events such as an evening with some Astra Zeneca postdocs to share experiences and learn more about the postdoctoral opportunities outside academia and some social events such as couple of wine and cheese nights in different locations, cocktail night and pub and clubbing nights.
**Inductions**
The Society welcomes new postdocs at regular inductions organised by the OPdA in the new Postdoc Centre at Eddington. There are typically 5/6 inductions per academic year, and each new postdoc is invited to attend the first available induction after their starting date at the University. For many people this is the first time they have any interaction with the PdOC Society and we take advantage of the opportunity to inform attendees about our newsletter and activities. This is also an opportunity for post-docs to talk informally to the membership officer, where questions can be answered, and signposting given to appropriate contacts within the University.

**Researcher Development activities**
The Society hosts a number of Researcher Development activities, the themes of which are determined in response to the needs of the members of the Society. In 2017/2018 the Society organised several evening researcher development sessions including Finding University Teaching Opportunities, Introduction to Mindfulness, and Industry Postdoc Positions. In addition, the Society in collaboration with the Researcher Development Programme (RDP) hosted a Masterclass on ‘Career Trajectories for Postdocs’ in July 2017. In the autumn PdOC hosted the first National Postdoc Meeting which saw a large participation by Cambridge postdocs and others from across the country to discuss the current state of postdocs and discuss the future with a focus on the reviewing the Concordat. We continued the successful interdisciplinary ‘Crossing the Barriers’ lecture series with two main events co-hosted at Corpus Christi Leckhampton Campus. These inter-disciplinary dinners and discussions gave postdocs an opportunity to present their research and perspective to a broad audience of both postdocs and graduate students from Corpus. Through regular communication and monthly informal lunch meetings, RD has continued coordination and input with various central offices that touch postdoc lives, including Careers, OPDA, and RDP. The RD officer regularly attend DPCNN meeting to help communicate initiatives, solicit feedback and further develop the network. This year also saw that coordination with PdoC and the launch of the Institution of Continuing Education, ECR-Teach Program. Postdocs learned about course-design principals and then designed their own course, many participants are looking forward to delivering their short courses in the next academic year. Finally we are excited to host Jorge Cham, science communicator and illustrator for PhD Comics for a workshop, lecture and formal in late June. We are also supporting a final interdisciplinary lecture and dinner in late July where various topics linked to space science and policy will be discussed. Funding for the Researcher Development events is provided by an annual allocation of £8k from the University’s Researcher Development Committee.

**Welfare activities**
PdOC is represented on the Staff Services Support Group and the Equality & Diversity Committee of the University. These offer great opportunities to find out more about services that can help postdocs (e.g. the staff counselling services) and share these with postdocs, and to speak up for postdoc needs.

This year PdOC’s welfare work has focused on mental health and support for families. In November we ran an after-work taster session on Mindfulness. We have been working with the Staff
Counselling Service to offer a version of their Wellbeing Course that is tailored to postdocs. In Lent term we ran a survey of postdoc parents and families, which had a brilliant response and is helping us to speak up for postdoc parents more effectively. In Easter term we ran a social event for postdoc families, with plenty of activities for children, and we hope to run more of these in the next year.

Financial Management

The Society is a not-for-profit body and is financially separate from the University. Most activities of the Society are funded by the participating members; for example, for most ticketed events run by the Society a small overhead (£1) above cost price is collected with every ticket sold. Revenue generated in this way covers the costs of running the Society. The Society has been fortunate to receive substantial donations in recent years, from the OPdA and other sources, which have greatly strengthened its financial position and allowing certain events to be run on a subsidised basis. This includes the upcoming Annual General Meeting itself, two dinners at Fitzwilliam College, a family event, among others.

Certain Society events are also subsidised through funding from the University's Researcher Development budget; these have included dinners and talks at Corpus Christi College's Leckhampton campus. The Society's Treasurer oversees expenditure and finance generally, and financial summaries of the Society are presented and approved at Annual General Meetings. For this year's information please see the 2018 PdOC End of Year Financial Report (EOFYR).

A long term aim of the Society's financial management has been to build and maintain a healthy reserve fund, which would be sufficient for running the Society through a period without income derived from grants and overheads, or when faced with an unexpected but essential outlay. In the past year that target has been deemed achieved, and the priority has instead shifted to a "zero-sum" approach where roughly the same level of reserves is maintained year-on-year.

The Society also benefits from in-kind support of OPdA staff, who spend a certain fraction of their time assisting the Society: James Brown currently acts as the Society's Secretary (James Brown), and Hollie Godden has recently joined providing administrative assistance.
PdOC Society Management Committee 2017/2018

Committee members elected at the AGM in June 2017 or co-opted

President: Lorinda Turner (Lt400@cam.ac.uk)
Vice-President: Paul Coxon (prc39@cam.ac.uk)
Treasurer: Stephen Kell (srk31@cam.ac.uk)
Membership Officer: Jasmine Childs-Fegredo (Jc2039@cam.ac.uk)
Social and Networking Events Officers: Teresa Almeida (Tba24@cam.ac.uk)

Communications Officers: Paul Bennett (wpb22@cam.ac.uk)
Laura Fachal (lf370@cam.ac.uk)
College Affiliations Officer: Alexia Cardona (ac812@cam.ac.uk)
Marketing Officer: Carl Spickett (until Nov 2017) (cs698@cam.ac.uk)

Research Development Initiatives Officer: Charlie Morgan (cmorgan@mrc-lmb.cam.ac.uk)
University Representation and Policy Officers: Ghina Halabi (gmh@ast.cam.ac.uk)
Matias Acosta (ma771@cam.ac.uk)
Welfare Officer: Joanna Waldie (jw353@cam.ac.uk)
Committee Members Without Portfolio: Arne Jungwirth (aj477@cam.ac.uk)
Alice Hutchings (ah793@cl.cam.ac.uk)
Sarah Steimer (ss2349@cam.ac.uk)

Non-elected Committee Members

Postdoctoral Staff Coordinator: James Brown (James.Brown@admin.cam.ac.uk)
Postdoc Societies Administrator: Hollie Godden (Hollie.Godden@admin.cam.ac.uk)
Chair of the DPCCN (co-opted July 2017): Tariq Masood (tm487@cam.ac.uk)
Senior Treasurer: Nicky Blanning (nb200@cam.ac.uk)