

## Annual Report 2016/2017

### 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 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 OPdA which provides access to office, meeting and event facilities in the Postdoc Centres at Mill Lane and the Biomedical Campus. Until recently the Society also had administrative and strategic support from a Postdoctoral Staff Coordinator; that post is currently vacant although the recruitment process to make a new appointment is on-going.

## 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.

<b>University Committee</b>	<b>PdOC Committee representative</b>
<b>Postdoctoral Matters Committee</b> By appointment by the General Board on nomination of the Society	Paul Coxon Tariq Masood
<b>Postdoctoral Advisory Committee</b>	Paul Coxon Lori Turner
<b>Pensions Working Group</b>	Arne Jungwirth
<b>Researcher Development Committee</b>	Marta Costa
<b>Equality and Diversity Committee</b>	Lori Turner
<b>Accommodation Syndicate</b>	Arne Jungwirth
<b>Festival of Wellbeing</b>	Susanne Lager
<b>Staff Support Services Group</b>	Susanne Lager

### *Annual and Extraordinary General Meetings*

The Society held an AGM in June 2016 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.

In January 2017 the Society held an Extraordinary General Meeting where a statement in support of a revised Graduate Union constitution was adopted and a few changes to the Society's constitution were approved.

### *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 55 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 Postdoctoral Matters Committee, the PdOC Society Committee and any other relevant committees *e.g.* the Researcher Development Committee and Human Resources Committee.

During 2016-17, the network discussed postdoc priorities related to researcher development, research funding and people management during three termly meetings. Among other key stakeholders, the network also hosted the following senior University officers for discussions:

- Professor Chris Abell, Pro Vice Chancellor - Research
- Professor Eilís Ferran, Pro Vice Chancellor for Institutional and International Relations
- Dr Peter Hedges, Head of the University Research Office
- Emma Stone, Director of Human Resources

### *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. During this year Adina Feldman was succeeded by Alexia Cardona 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 has succeeded Adina Feldman 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.* by organising the early evening researcher development session on 'College Affiliations' (see below) and 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 10% during the last two years to about 25% of all postdocs. The Society will continue to work towards postdoctoral College affiliations being an option for 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 2017, the PdOC Society sends its weekly newsletter to a mailing list of over 2,200 (7% increase since June 2016), there are over 2,100 followers on Facebook (14% increase since June 2016) and more than 1,500 twitter followers (nearly 30% increase since June 2016).

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 the postdoc community so we can offer support when they need us the most.

## Recent initiatives

- **Letter to Faculties – Regent House**

For the second year in a row the Society wrote letters in August 2016 to selected Faculties to encourage them to include postdocs in their submission to the roll of the Regent House. We received responses from the Faculty of Clinical Medicine, Biology, Earth Sciences and Veterinary Medicine.

- **Consultation Response – Commons Science and Technology Select Committee**

The Society made a submission to the inquiry on “Leaving the EU: implications and opportunities for science and research” from the Commons Science and Technology Select Committee. To prepare the submission we held an open meeting in August 2016 in which 21 people participated.

- **Royal Society – Research Culture and the Future of Science**

Adina Feldman and Paul Coxon from the Society Committee participated in a national conference about the future of research culture in September 2016 and a follow-up workshop in April 2017 at the Royal Society. Based on the discussions at these meeting the idea of organising a National Postdoc Meeting in Cambridge was born, and this is now planned for September 2017.

- **Discussion remarks – Board of Scrutiny Report**

Adina Feldman submitted remarks on behalf of the Society to a Discussion in the Senate House about the Twenty-First Report of the Board of Scrutiny in October 2016.

- **Consultation Response – The Future of the Research Excellence Framework (REF)**

Members of the Committee contributed to a consultation response coordinated by the UKRSA on the Future of the REF from the Higher Education Funding Council of England in March 2017.

- **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 are preparing a report based on these data that will be presented to senior university officials.

## 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 1,900 spaces for postdocs at these 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, during the last year, was 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 Newnham College in 2016. 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, highlights this year being several featuring Basil Rathbone at Sherlock Holmes), and semi-regular restaurant nights (*e.g.* La Margherita), cinema trips (*e.g.* Toni Erdmann, shorts at the Cambridge Film Festival), brunches (*e.g.* at Stir and Bill's), and others.

- **Hikes**

There have been three hikes in the past year: two weekend hiking trips to the Yorkshire Dales (August 2016) and Exmoor National Park (May 2017), and a day hike in the North Chilterns (August 2016).

- **College dinners**

This past year we have arranged the Christmas dinner at Newnham College and a dinner at Hughes Hall in February 2017. We also arranged smaller dinners at Corpus Christi (Leckhampton) and a dinner at Peterhouse in association with the Interdisciplinary lecture series, see below.

- **Day trips**

These have included trips to St Albans Christmas Market, the English Whisky Company (July 2016), Mountfitchet Castle (July 2016), and the North Norfolk Coast (September 2016).

- **Special events**

This year we have organised a wine tasting (April 2017), Burns Night dinner at the St John's Chop House (January 2017), a trip to the Wimbledon tennis championships (June 2016), punting (August 2016), a barbecue at Darwin College (September 2016) and museum trips including the Centre for Computing History (January 2017), the Whipple Museum (February 2017) and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (May 2017).

### *Inductions*

The Society welcomes new postdocs at regular inductions organised by the OPdA in the Postdoc Centre. 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.

### *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 2016/2017 the Society organised six early evening researcher development sessions hosted on the themes of 'History of Cambridge and its Traditions', 'Immigration', 'Pensions', 'University Teaching', 'College Affiliations' and 'Caring Responsibilities'. In addition, the Society in collaboration with the Personal and Professional Development Programme (PPD), provided one half-day workshop on the theme of 'Dealing with Stress'. One large Masterclass on 'Career Trajectories for Postdocs' has been planned in this period and is scheduled for the 20<sup>th</sup> July. These events are delivered by an external expert. The successful interdisciplinary 'Crossing the Barriers' lecture series continued during this year, with two main events. This series provides postdocs with the opportunity to network with high profile researchers pursuing an interdisciplinary agenda. The topics for this year were 'What do genes, manuscripts, languages, folk tales, and Persian carpets have in common?' presented by Professor Chris Howe from the Department of Biochemistry and 'Observations from the Edge of Beauty ~ an Arts-Science Collaboration' presented by Clive Wilkins (Artist-in-Residence) and Professor Nicky Clayton of the Department of Psychology. Linked to each of the main lectures, there was also a satellite event, in which postdocs presented their research. The PdOC Society has continued to host an Interdisciplinary Research Club, topics included 'Computer Vision', 'Tissue Engineering', and 'Cell Biology'. Funding for the Researcher Development events is provided by a small annual allocation of £8k from the University's Researcher Development Committee.

### *Welfare activities*

The Society takes an interest in welfare issues such as family, health, and equity, which are relevant for Cambridge postdocs. Two family events were hosted by the Society in the past year, a garden party at Murray Edwards College and a Halloween party at the Postdoc Centre, Mill Lane. The other main action included connecting with existing organisations that are already working with welfare issues in the university.

### **Financial Management**

Financial conduct of the Society is in accordance with the University's approved practice. The Society applies for funding, or generates much of its funding from appropriate events. Most activities of the Society are funded by the participating members, and we collect a small overhead (£1) for every ticket sold to events hosted by the Society. The PdOC Society operates as not-for-profit, and ticketed events are sold to members 'at cost', meaning that the Society does not make any substantial revenue over and above the £1 overhead. The basic revenue generated by the overhead is expected to make the major contribution to the cost of running the Society.

In addition, the Society has received grants of £3,000 in 2015 and £2,000 in 2016 from the OPdA which have helped to fund and subsidise some activities and events for our members, and has funded professional development for the PdOC Committee. The PdOC Researcher Development activities are funded by a grant from the University's Researcher Development Committee (see above).

The process for approving income and expenditure is taken by the role of the successive Treasurers, with the Senior Treasurer, who has responsibility for financial management. Procedurally, financial

summaries of the Society are presented and approved at Annual General Meetings; please see the 2017 PdOC End of Year Financial Report (EOFYR) for details. A long term aim of the Society's financial management is to build and maintain a reserve fund, principally as a backup for the running of the Society autonomously for an Academic year, in the absence of income derived from grants and overheads.

### **PdOC Society Management Committee 2016/2017**

*Committee members elected at the AGM in June 2016 or co-opted*

<b>President</b>	Adina Feldman	af550@cam.ac.uk
<b>Vice-President</b>	Paul Coxon	prc39@cam.ac.uk
<b>Treasurer</b>	Lorinda Turner	lt400@medschl.cam.ac.uk
<b>Membership Officer</b>	Alessandro Rossi	ar446@cam.ac.uk
<b>Social and Networking Events Officers</b>	Stephen Kell	srk31@cam.ac.uk
	Sarah Steimer	ss2349@cam.ac.uk
<b>Communications Officers</b>	Paul Bennett	wpb22@cam.ac.uk
	Laura Fachal	lf370@cam.ac.uk
<b>College Affiliations Officer</b>	Alexia Cardona	ac812@cam.ac.uk
<b>Marketing Officer</b>	Carl Spickett (co-opted October 2016)	cs698@cam.ac.uk
<b>Research Development Initiatives Officer</b>	Marta Costa	mmc46@cam.ac.uk
<b>University Representation and Policy Officers</b>	Ghina Halabi	gmh@ast.cam.ac.uk
	Elizabeth Savage (until January 2017)	leu21@cam.ac.uk
<b>Welfare Officer</b>	Susanne Lager	sml60@medschl.cam.ac.uk
<b>Committee Members Without Portfolio</b>	Arne Jungwirth	aj477@cam.ac.uk
	Alice Hutchings	ah793@cl.cam.ac.uk
	Franck Courbon (until September 2016)	frc26@cam.ac.uk

*Non-elected Committee Members*

<b>Postdoctoral Staff Coordinator</b>	Joy Warde (until February 2017)	jj112@cam.ac.uk
<b>Chair of the DPCCN</b>	Tariq Masood (co-opted July 2016)	tm487@cam.ac.uk
<b>Senior Treasurer</b>	Nicky Blanning	nb200@cam.ac.uk