



The Postdocs of Cambridge (PdOC) Society

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Hosted by:

The Postdoc Centre, 16 Mill Lane, Cambridge, CB2 1SB
The Accommodation Service, Kelllet Lodge, Tennis Court Road, Cambridge, CB2 1QJ

The PdOC Society aims to:

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

PdOC Society Reach

The PdOC Society is open to all postdocs at the University of Cambridge and UPIs. Postdocs include all contract staff who have completed or are finishing their doctorate but do not have long-term tenure, or established positions. As of June 2015, the PdOC Society sends its weekly newsletter to a mailing list of over 1850 (16% increase on 2013/14), there are over 1400 likes on facebook (40% increase on 2013/14) and 750 twitter followers (300% increase on 2013/14).

The Society complements the University's infrastructure; 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.

Background

There are more than 3500 postdocs (Research Associates, Senior Research Associates and Fellows) within the University of Cambridge and its UPIs. This diverse group of postdocs are delivering the bulk of the University's research output, striving to succeed with limited tenure. The flow of contract postdoctoral workers is probably one of the University's most essential assets.

The PdOC Society was founded by Dr Rob Wallach in 2001, to bring this disparate group of staff together, create new opportunities and encourage researchers to meet others outside their individual research disciplines.

Since May 2014, the PdOC Society is co-located with the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPDA), Newcomers and Visiting Scholars (NVS) Society in the Postdoc Centre at 16 Mill Lane. The PdOC Society continues to be supported by the Accommodation Service; Nicky Blanning, Head of the Accommodation Service, is the Society's Senior Treasurer.

Postdoc Representation and 'Voice'

The Society strives to represent the needs of postdocs at appropriate levels of decision-making within the University. The Society liaises with the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs to increase representation on a number of University and departmental committees. PdOC Society Committee members represent postdocs on the OPdA Steering Committee, OPdA Management Committee, Pensions Working Group, Researcher Development Committee and the Accommodation Syndicate.

PdOC chairs the 'Departmental Postdoc Committee Chairs Network' (DPCNN). This network, established in May 2014, brings together the chair (or representative) from each departmental postdoc committee with the aim of providing a representative voice for postdocs and providing support and training for postdocs who organise departmental postdoc groups. A full list of Department committees and contact details can be found on www.pdoc.cam.ac.uk/dpccn

The DPCCN has developed a list of postdoc priorities as identified by representatives of the various departmental postdoc committees. The top four priorities are to ensure that

- (i) postdocs have the opportunity to achieve research excellence and recognition*
- (ii) postdocs have support for their strategic career plan and progression*
- (iii) postdocs have leadership and teaching opportunities*
- (iv) postdocs are represented at a departmental and University level*

Each of the identified priorities are explored in depth at the termly DPCCN meeting and the outcomes reported to the OPdA Management Committee, PdOC Society and any other relevant committee e.g. Researcher Development Committee.

In 2014/15 PdOC has been closely monitoring the currently on-going process and consultation for revising the Universities Superannuation Scheme for pensions.

Activities of The PdOC Society 2014-2015

The PdOC Society organises a series of networking events to enhance intellectual and social interaction between postdocs from different disciplines. The opening of the Postdoc Centre in May 2014 has greatly assisted in the range, number, affordability and collaborative nature of PdOC events. During the year ending 31 May 2015 the PdOC society provided 2790 spaces for postdocs at social and academic networking events.

The activities of the PdOC Society for 2014/15 are summarised below:

- *Welcoming postdocs*
The Society pro-actively welcomes new and existing postdocs to weekly informal lunches and to monthly social events. The Society also participates in welcome induction events for new staff.
- *Providing a 'community' for postdocs*
PdOC has a track record of providing a range of vibrant social activities for Cambridge postdocs. During 2014/15 PdOC activities increased in number, range and participation. This ranged from the ever-popular College dinners, to chocolate tasting, to coach trips to games and film nights. The PdOC social and networking events are at the heart of the

PdOC Society. Since the majority of postdocs are excluded from Collegiate Cambridge, PdOC 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 was generously supported by the Master of Emmanuel College and the OPdA. A new focus for this year was events for postdocs and their families including a Christmas party (with NVS) and an Easter Egg Hunt event.

- *Providing networking and researcher development opportunities*
The Society hosts a number of Researcher Development activities, the themes of these activities are provided in response to the needs of the members of the PdOC Society. In 2014/15 PdOC provided four early evening researcher development sessions hosted around the themes of 'Welcome to Cambridge', 'University Teaching Opportunities', 'How Not to Procrastinate' and 'Pitch Me if you Can'. PdOC also continued the successful interdisciplinary 'Crossing the Barriers' lecture series. This series provides postdocs with the opportunity to network with high profile speakers and to present their own research in an interdisciplinary setting. Themes for this year were 'Evolution - an interdisciplinary Challenge' launched by Prof Robert Foley and 'Environmental Research' by Dr Bhaskar Vira. Funding for the Researcher Development events is provided by a small annual allocation of £8k from the University's Researcher Development Committee.
- *Sharing and disseminating information*
The Society is a central information point for postdocs, bringing together information from a wide range of University services. Through the Society's website, its social media presence and weekly newsletter, the Committee ensures information is consolidated and disseminated with opportunities for all postdocs.
- *Encouraging Cambridge College affiliation and engagement*
A large proportion of postdoctoral researchers have not been Cambridge students, nor are they funded by a College benefaction (eg Junior Research Fellowships), and therefore have no access to the extra social, intellectual and teaching interactions that most Colleges provide. The Society's Committee proactively engages with the Senior Fellowships of the individual Colleges, encouraging them to see value in widening opportunities for postdocs and early career researchers. The Society then disseminates information about postdoctoral affiliations, any teaching/supervision and research opportunities and other College membership opportunities.
- *Welfare action plan*
The society has developed a welfare action plan for postdocs during the year 2014-15. Welfare means in this case family, health, equity and other welfare issues relevant for Cambridge postdocs. One key action was to organize family events as described earlier. The other main action included collecting information from existing organizations that are already working in welfare theme in the university (networking action). This work will continue in the coming year.
- *Monitoring the Postdoctoral provision in other Institutions*
As an outlook, the Society aims to keep abreast of provision for postdoctoral researchers in other institutions nationally and internationally. Importantly the Society will look to implement elements of "best practice" learnt from these other institutions. Adina Feldman is the East of England Representative on the UK Research Staff Association (UKRSA) and represented PdOC at the UKRSA meetings in November in Bristol and in June in London.

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Financial Management of the PdOC Society

Financial conduct of the Society will be in accordance with the University's approved practice. The Society will apply for funding, or generate much of its funding from appropriate events. For underlying costs, basic revenue will be generated by charging "members", either an overhead for regular activities or an individual yearly membership fee. The basic revenue is expected to make the major contribution to the cost of running the Society.

The process for approving income and expenditure is taken by the role of the successive Treasurers, with the Senior Treasurer, who will have responsibility for financial management. Procedurally, financial summaries of the Society will be presented and approved at Annual General Meetings. 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.

Officers and Committee of the PdOC Society

The PdOC Society is a University Senior Society, administered by a small committee of volunteers with defined roles and offices defined in its current constitution. The PdOC Society receives administrative support by the University of Cambridge Accommodation Service and the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. The PdOC Committee would like to thank the staff of the OPdA and Accommodation Service for their help, support and guidance during the last year; particular thanks goes to Karina Prasad, Head of the OPdA and Nicky Blanning, Head of the Accommodation Service.

Committee Membership (elected at the PdOC Society AGM July 2014)

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