



Postdocs of Cambridge Society  
University of Cambridge

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Management Committee

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# THE POSTDOCS OF CAMBRIDGE (PDOC) SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORT 2015/2016

THE PDOC SOCIETY IS HOSTED BY

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

SOCIETY AIMS

- 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.

REACH

The PdOC Society is open to all postdocs at the University of Cambridge and University Partnering Institutes. Postdocs include all contract research staff who have completed or are finishing their doctorate but do not have long-term tenure, or established positions. As of June 2016, the PdOC Society sends its weekly newsletter to a mailing list of over 2060 (11% increase on 2014/15), there are over 1920 likes on facebook (37% increase on 2014/15) and 1200 twitter followers (60% increase on 2014/15).

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 4000 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, Equality and Diversity Committee, and the Accommodation Syndicate. In addition the PdOC Society has recruited postdocs to serve on other University Committees as the need arises.

At the 2015 PdOC Annual General Meeting a fact sheet was presented that described the current situation concerning postdoc membership in the University governing body Regent House. At that point about 890 research staff were on the Roll of Regent House meaning that a majority of postdocs are not allowed to stand for and vote in elections nor do they have the automatic right to attend and participate in discussions in the Senate House. During the autumn of 2015 the PdOC Society did a number of activities to raise awareness about this issue including several information items in the weekly newsletter. The PdOC Society committee also wrote letters to 12 faculties urging them to include postdocs as members of their faculty and to submit them to the Roll of Regent House. We received responses from the faculties of Chemistry and Physics, Engineering, Biology, Earth Sciences and Geography, Clinical Medicine, and Asian and Middle Eastern Studies.

In the autumn of 2015 PdOC was asked to consult on the plans for what was at that point referred to as the "Postdoctoral Foundation" which includes the future of the OPdA but also the physical spaces for postdocs established or in the process of becoming established in the central Postdoc Centre, the future North West Cambridge site, and the Biomedical Campus, among other things. In response, the committee adopted a statement outlining 13 points for discussion about the future of postdocs at the University.

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](http://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.

#### SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

The PdOC Society organises a series of networking events to enhance intellectual and social interaction between postdocs from different disciplines. The Society would like to thank the OPdA for provision of the Postdoc Centre. This flexible, centrally located space has transformed the numbers and range of PdOC events over the past two years. During the year ending 31 May 2016 the PdOC Society provided over 2500 spaces for postdocs at social and academic networking events. The activities of the PdOC Society for 2015/16 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 postdocs.

- Providing a 'community' for postdocs

PdOC has a track record of providing a range of vibrant social activities for Cambridge postdocs. During 2015/16 PdOC 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 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 annual PdOC Christmas dinner at Selwyn College. A new focus for this year was a significantly increased number of small scale informal social events around Cambridge.

- 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 2015/16 PdOC provided four early evening researcher development sessions hosted on the themes of 'Immigration', 'Pensions', 'University Teaching' and 'College Affiliations'. In addition, PdOC in collaboration with PPD, provided three half-day Masterclasses around the theme of 'leadership', each delivered by an external expert. The successful interdisciplinary 'Crossing the Barriers' lecture series continued during this year. This series provides postdocs with the opportunity to network with high profile researchers pursuing an interdisciplinary agenda. The topic for this year was 'Naughty numbers in the news: the public communication of statistics' presented by Prof David Spiegelhalter, Winton Professor for the Public Understanding of Risk. PdOC has also launched an Interdisciplinary Research Club during this year, topics included 'Interdisciplinary research', 'Experimental approaches to the study of consciousness', 'Linguistic approaches to the study of consciousness', and 'Animal communication'. 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. The weekly newsletter is now delivered to over 2060 subscribers.

- 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 (e.g. Junior Research Fellowships), and therefore have no access to the extra intellectual, social 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

Welfare means in this case family, health, equity and other welfare issues relevant for Cambridge postdocs. One key action during 2015/16 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 UKRSA meetings.

#### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

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.

#### SOCIETY OFFICERS AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

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 June 2015)

President	<b>Maya Ghossaini</b>	mg458@medschl.cam.ac.uk
Vice-President	<b>Adina Feldman</b>	adina.feldman@mrc-epid.cam.ac.uk
Treasurer	<b>Lori Turner</b>	lt400@medschl.cam.ac.uk
Membership	<b>Paul Coxon</b>	prc39@cam.ac.uk
Social and Networking Events	<b>Stephen Kell</b>	srk31@cam.ac.uk
	<b>Hannah West</b>	hdw27@medschl.cam.ac.uk (co-opted Oct 2015)

Communications	<b>Paul Bennett</b>	wpb22@cam.ac.uk
	<b>Severine Mollard</b>	severine.mollard@cruk.cam.ac.uk
College Affiliations	<b>Antonis Kanellopoulos</b>	ak880@cam.ac.uk
Marketing	<b>Ewa Marek</b>	ejm94@cam.ac.uk (co-opted Jan 2016)
	<b>Ghina Halabi</b>	gmh@ast.cam.ac.uk (co-opted March 2016)
Researcher Development Initiatives	<b>Aamir Mukadam</b>	asm64@cam.ac.uk
University Representation and Policy	<b>Marta Costa</b>	mmc46@cam.ac.uk (co-opted Sept 2015)
Welfare	<b>Susanne Lager</b>	sml60@medschl.cam.ac.uk
Committee member	<b>Clare Simpson</b>	cs740@cam.ac.uk
	<b>Alice Hutchings</b>	ah793@cl.cam.ac.uk
	<b>Arne Jungwirth</b>	aj477@cam.ac.uk
	<b>Marko Tainio</b>	mkt27@medschl.cam.ac.uk (June 2015 – Nov 2015)
Other Co-opted committee members		
DPCCN Chair	<b>Tariq Masood</b>	tm487@cam.ac.uk
Post-doctoral Research Staff Coordinator & Secretary	<b>Joy Warde</b>	joy.warde@admin.cam.ac.uk
Head of Accommodation Service & Senior Treasurer	<b>Nicky Blanning</b>	nb200@cam.ac.uk