



Minutes of the meeting of the Post-Doc Forum held at 12noon on Monday 3 July 2017,
in Room FW11, William Gates Building

Present: David Chisnall
Claire Chapman (Secretary)
Daniel Bates
Matthew Danish
Salvator Galea
Alice Hutchings
Stephen Kell (Chair)
Andrea Kells
Laura Rimell
Peter Robinson
Caroline Stewart
Noa Zilberman

1. Apologies

Ekaterina Kochmar
Pietro Lio'
Marwa Mahmoud
Zohreh Shams

2. Welcome to New Members

Matt Danish, Zohreh Shams and Peter Robinson were welcomed to the Forum.

3. Minutes of last minutes

The minutes from the last meeting held on Monday 14 November 2017 were approved.

4. Report on actions from last meeting

i. Mentoring Scheme update of mentors

The scheme is progressing well, but sometimes it is a struggle to find mentors and a call out is circulated. NZ said that one of the female post-doc staff had mentioned via women@CL that they had not received any offer of a mentor. CS will follow this up. It was agreed that the inclusion in the mentoring scheme should be automatic unless anyone chooses to opt out. It was noted that PhD students may want to opt out but it would be for them to request this.

Action: CS

ii. Anonymous case studies of RAs update

There are 3-4 case studies of RAs who have been successfully promoted to SRA on the website. It was agreed that there should be a rolling programme of case studies in order to keep the content current.

Action: CC

iii. Research Programmer post update

There are no funds available in the Department to fund a career progression path post for post docs who wish to remain in research, but not in a leadership role. AK reported that EPSRC now provide funds for this sort of post which can be applied for within the grant, however, it was felt that no single grant should solely fund such a post. It was noted that there are other Departments who have a need for a similar post, but they have more support roles at a lower grade to provide this service.

iv. Probation info re-sent to PIs who employ staff

The information has been circulated.

v. Research grant emails, circulation to RAs

It was decided that future emails advertising training courses on preparing grant proposals or fellowship applications should be circulated to RAs as well as SRAs. RAs will be encouraged to attend grant application workshops run by the School of Technology or the Researcher Development Programme. CS said that the Department did not wish to exclude staff from training opportunities and she would try to ensure RAs were kept informed.

Action: CS

vi. Travel Funds for RAs update

It was reported that the Industrial Supporters Club fund to support research student travel has overspent and that research staff travel costs should be costed in grant applications. Specific travel details don't need to be listed in grant applications, just an estimation of travel costs which will be incurred. It was felt this issue may be resolved in certain cases by the PI and Post Doc discussing the conferences to be attended when initially budgeting for this in the grant application. It was agreed that this suggestion should be included in the Induction Guidelines and Checklist.

It was agreed that there should be guidelines on how RAs should apply for travel/conference funds in exceptional circumstances. These guidelines should incorporate the information about the Wiseman Award, which looks favourably at staff members making a strong overall contribution to the Department.

Action: CC/CS

vii. Departmental policy on salary differential for SRAs applying for fellowships

AH had approached Joy Warde from PdOC (Postdocs of Cambridge Society) for advice but she had not encountered this before. The Clinical School Office was also asked. It was felt it may not be such an issue for other Departments who tended not to promote many RAs to SRA without fellowships.

The Department of Engineering encounters a similar problem and their policy is for the SRA to initially discuss this with their PI to see there is top up funding available. If no solution is found, then it would be discussed with the Head of Division.

Central HR has agreed to allow SRAs to resign from their current role in order to take up a fellowship; however this would incur a pay cut and is

clearly not an ideal situation. It was questioned whether the issue of salary differentiation has been notified to the funders. AK said it had but given they receive a huge number of applications and the fellowships were deemed to be very prestigious, this has not been of a concern to them.

5. **Suggestion from Pietro Lio' for all lab RAs to submit feedback to the Forum**
Forum members agreed it may be beneficial for all lab post docs to be invited to attend meetings if they have any items for discussion, although attendees would need to decide ahead of time so that catering could be arranged. It was agreed that the next meeting date will be sent to lab-ras a week in advance inviting them to attend. A Doodle Poll sign up will also be circulated.

It was also agreed that the names of each research group representative should be added to notice boards and the screens in the Atrium. This might encourage post docs to feed items and comments through their representatives.

Action: CC

6. **Researcher Developer Co-ordinator for 2017-18**
Pietro Lio' will be stepping down on 30 September 2017 and the new co-ordinator will be appointed from 1 October 2017.

Addendum: Dr Andy Rice will be reinstated as Researcher Development Coordinator for 2017-18. Dr Eva Kalyvianaki will then shadow him for a year with the view to take over the role in 2018-19.

7. **Next Social Event**
SK and DB will decide the date for the next mentor and mentee tea and will circulate an invitation to lab-ras.

Action: SK and DB

8. **Any other business**

- i. **Finance Training for RAs**

NZ suggested it would be helpful to provide RAs with finance training and guidelines on Research Grants (X5). AK agreed that as well as an annual in-house training session the guidelines should also be published on the web. She agreed to ask Nicholas Ward to initially draft some guidelines and will also speak to the Finance Office about arranging a briefing session.

Action: AK

- ii. **Appraisal**

It was noted an RA had not been offered an appraisal as they had worked for 8 weeks, left for 1 week and then had a new contract issued. CS said that it was difficult to pick up anomalies like this but it should be noted that an appraisal can be requested at any time. Clarification will be added to the Induction Guidelines and Check List on the web.

Action: CC

9. **Date of next meeting**
To be held in Michaelmas Term.