
Research Staff Forum Meeting

Monday, 28 October 2019,
12 noon, Room GC22, William Gates Building

Minutes

Present

Matt Danish (MRD) (Chair)
Celia Burns (CB) (Secretary)
Andrew Caines (AC)
Yi Ting Chua (YC)
Heidi Howard (HH)

Eva Kalyvianaki (EK)
Zohreh Shams (ZS)
James Sharkey (JPS)
Caroline Stewart (CS)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Angeliki Koutsoukou-Argyraki and Sergei Skorobogatov.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes from the last meeting held on 24 July 2019 were approved.

3. Report on Actions from Last Meeting

i. Shared Facilities Hub

Following the departure of the former department representative for the West Cambridge Shared Facilities Hub, CS is seeking a new representative. There was nothing new to report from the Project group as there has not been a meeting for some time.

CS reported that the Shared Facilities Hub is at a stage where it may need a senior member of staff who has a broad view of the Department. However, anyone interested in taking part, or who has feedback they would like conveyed should contact CS.

Action: CS

ii. Improving the Progression of Post-Docs

ZS reported that Stewart Carswell (Web and Moodle Specialist) had created a wiki page, which ZS had populated with information on options available to Post-Docs for career progression. Forum members were asked to comment on the wiki page (a link to the wiki page would be circulated).

Action: ZS and Forum Members

iii. Representative for Research Assistants

A new representative for Research Assistants was being sought, to replace JPS who is now a Research Associate. JPS had emailed Research Assistants in order to

identify a non-PhD Research Assistant replacement, but there had been no response. Forum members agreed to invite RAs from their own groups to the next meeting in the hope that one of them might be interested in filling this role.

Action: Forum Members

iv. **Post-Doc Training Fund**

There were no further leads with regard to acquiring funding for Post-Doc training via grant proposals. EK (who has replaced Andrew Rice on the Committee as Researcher Development Coordinator) noted that the Researcher Development Unit could possibly provide training not covered by central services. CS said she thought it was likely that the Department could provide funding for relevant training sessions identified by the group.

EK reported that the University offers training for staff but asked for more context regarding the request. MD reported on the background to the item. Forum members agreed to send EK any specific training ideas, which she would follow up with the Researcher Development Unit and the Department.

Action: EK

v. **Lecturing Opportunities for Research Assistants**

ZS reported that she had reviewed the Moodle sign-up sheet for individuals interested in guest lecturing. The sheet was very brief, simply requesting a CV to be uploaded. It was noted that the sign-up sheet was coordinated by Teaching Administration and was used for shadowing-request purposes. Forum members suggested that it should ask for information about the RA's research interests, experience, and what they would like to do; and that a more interactive, two-way process would be useful.

It was agreed that CS would feed back to the TMC the wish to make the process a two-way process between UTOs and RAs, and EK would speak to someone from the Post-Doc side. If a Forum member wished to volunteer to coordinate this item, or if they knew of someone who might like to do so, they should contact EK.

Action: CS, EK

vi. **Researcher Developer Programme Talks**

It was noted that suggestions for talks that could be included in the Researcher Development Programme should now be sent to EK, who has replaced Andy Rice as Researcher Development Coordinator.

Action: EK

4. **Specific Discussion Topics/Presentations**

Forum members discussed possible topics for 20-minute presentations at the beginning of future RSF meetings, including presentation of current research, elevator-pitch practice, and writing grants. Meeting participants were asked to send any proposals to MD or CS. If a talk is planned for the next meeting, a larger venue and extra refreshments will need to be arranged.

Action: Forum Members

5. **Revisions to the Concordat**

YC introduced the Concordat (<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat>), noting that she wanted to raise awareness of it rather than to address any specific issues at this point. Produced by Vitae (a non-profit programme supporting the professional development of researchers), the Concordat 2019 sets out three principles (environment and culture,

employment, and professional and career development) for ensuring a healthy work environment for Post-Docs, with outlined responsibilities for four stakeholder groups. The University is in the process of discussing the Concordat with various involved parties and will formally decide on signing the document later this academic year (previously it had been signed by institutional representatives, rather than the institution itself).

6. Any Other Business

Cycle Park Reconfiguration: Forum members discussed the proposals MD had received for a possible cycle park reconfiguration. The proposals followed an earlier proposal for a protected walking/cycling pathway on JJ Thomson Avenue, which, as proposed, would have encroached on the Department's current cycle park. It had subsequently been agreed that both the pathway and a reconfiguration of the Department's cycle park should be carried out together.

Forum members considered the proposals, including the number and type of spaces proposed for the secure and open parking, and the space between them; the desire for secure parking and the related security issues (including the ease, currently, for unauthorised individuals to access the secure area, the theft of bicycle parts, and the potential installation of intelligent sensors); and accessibility (including the number, and width, of entrances to the secure area).

Estates Management had suggested using the empty space on the south-west corner of the building by the second entrance near the café. This had not been considered before, and Forum members agreed with the suggestion. MD asked meeting participants to send any further comments to him as he would be responding to EM's proposed plans.

Mentoring Scheme: in connection with populating the wiki page, ZS enquired about the mentoring scheme, suggesting that the process for pairing mentors and mentees could be made more interactive; and HH requested that College Fellows be included in the scheme. CS reported that the HR Manager was looking at refreshing the mentoring process and said that she would report these comments back to her.

Action: CS

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place in the Lent Term (late January/early February), to be arranged by Doodle poll.