



Research Staff Forum Meeting

2 p.m. on Monday, 22 February 2021
(held via videoconference)

Minutes

Present:

Matt Danish (MRD) (Chair)
Daniel Bates (DB)
Celia Burns (CB) (Secretary)
Andrew Caines (AC)
Helen Francis (HJF)
Heidi Howard (HH)
Jasmin Jahic

Eva Kalyvianaki (EK)
Angeliki Koutsoukou-Argyraiki (AKA)
Zohreh Shams (ZS)
James Sharkey (JPS)
Sergei Skorobogatov (SS)
Caroline Stewart (CS)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Sergei Skorobogatov.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2020 were approved.

3. RSF Discussion Topic—The Research Strategy Team

Helen Francis, Research Strategy Manager, gave a presentation, introducing the Department's Research Strategy Team and highlighting the support the team can offer research staff.

Questions after the presentation raised the following issues:

- *Repeat of the presentation to a wider audience:* Helen agreed to do the presentation again to a wider audience so that others could have the opportunity to ask questions. The presentation could be recorded and made available after the event.

Action: Helen Francis

- *Support for writing fellowship applications:* Helen expanded on the kind of help she could offer. As well as helping individuals, Helen could do a presentation on this topic. She is very keen to find interested people early on so that support can be provided.
 - **Action: Helen Francis**
- *Communication of information:* Forum members acknowledged that there is a lot of support available from experienced colleagues within the Department, but that postdocs and first-year PhD students are not aware of these opportunities, so it is important to communicate the information. It was suggested that information should be

shared by email. The Support for Research Staff Wiki page was also highlighted as an information resource.

- *Fellowships and funding opportunities*: Helen confirmed that the requirement for a minimal level of experience following PhD for these opportunities was normally strongly adhered to unless the applicant had taken some time away from academia (maternity leave, for example), in which case there was some flexibility.

4. Report on Actions from the Last Meeting

i. Forum Membership

The Forum is still seeking a representative from the Rainbow Graphics & Interaction Group.

ii. Representative for Research Assistants

The Forum is still seeking a Research Assistant who is not doing a PhD.

iii. Lecturing Opportunities for Research Staff

EK reported that there had been a discussion at a Wednesday meeting about guest-lecturing opportunities for research staff, but nothing concrete had been decided. The Head of Department was quite keen on the idea but needs to see what kind of plans will be put forward.

iv. Notifications of Happy Hours and Wellbeing Teas

MD noted that he had not had time to organise Happy Hours recently. He confirmed that the Wellbeing Teas are still taking place and that a reminder had been circulated.

v. Use of Face Coverings

CS confirmed that she had sent a reminder to students about wearing face coverings.

5. Results of the Pulse Survey

The Wellbeing Committee had invited Forum members to discuss the results of the initial pulse survey. The Forum noted that it would be important to encourage a greater turnout from research staff and PhD students in the next survey. There was concern for the high number of respondents disagreeing with the 'Stress and anxiety arising from work are rarely overwhelming' question, but there was also uncertainty about the validity of the statistic for research staff due to the low turnout.

6. Wellbeing – Departmental Announcements

MRD encouraged Forum members to participate in the fortnightly Town Hall meetings. A suggestion was made to hold the meetings in a different slot occasionally to allow people who were not available for the regular slot an opportunity to attend. CS said she would pass this suggestion on to the Head of Department.

Action: CS

7. Wellbeing – Report for the Wellbeing Committee

Forum members discussed wellbeing under the Results of the Pulse Survey item (item 5) above.

8. Buildings and Environment Committee (B&EC) – Update

MRD, Postdoc representative on the B&EC, reminded Forum members that anyone who needs to go in the building must email cl-shutdown@cl.cam.ac.uk beforehand; and plans for providing more secure enclosed cycle parking are going ahead.

9. Equality and Diversity Committee (E&DC) – Update

The E&DC is currently trying to find a Chair to replace Richard Mort who is on sabbatical, and consequently has not met since November. HH, Postdoc representative on the E&DC, noted that there was nothing else to report.

10. Any Other Business

(i) Communications

The suggestion for improved communication within the research staff group (for both funding and social purposes) was raised. Forum members discussed adding a Slack group to an existing CST Slack group and agreed to look into this further outside of the meeting.

Action: Forum members

11. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that CB would circulate a Doodle poll for a meeting in the Easter term.

Action: CB