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## Research Staff Forum Meeting

Wednesday, 2 March 2022, 11 a.m.  
(via videoconference)

### Minutes

**Present:**

Matt Danish (MRD) (Chair)

Daniel Bates (DB)

Celia Burns (CB) (Secretary)

Andrew Caines (APC)

Franck Courbon (FRC)

Helen Francis (HJF)

Eva Kalyvianaki (EK)

Martin Kleppmann (MK)

Angeliki Koutsoukou-Argyraki (AKA)

Caroline Stewart (CS)

#### 1. Postdoc Academy – Research Culture

Liz Simmonds, Assistant Head of the Postdoc Academy, gave a talk about the current priorities for improving research culture in Cambridge, and invited input from the meeting attendees. The presentation is available [here](#).

Liz noted the different areas included within the research culture umbrella (reward and recognition, open research, inclusive environments, professional development, and career pathways) and briefly explained the Academy's ambitions for research culture, what it has already done, and what it is doing in this area. Liz noted that representatives are being sought to join the working group on the Research Associate to Senior Research Associate promotions pathway.

Andrew Caines raised the issue of the wider progression between the Research Assistant (Grade 5) position and that of Principal Research Associate (Grade 11), including other reward recognition within grades, e.g., Research Associate and Senior Research Associate, without having to jump to the next grade. For instance, a Postdoc might be in a Research Associate position for four years, which might look like there has been no progression at all.

The issue of SRAs having to find the funding for their promotion was also raised. Helen Francis suggested that PIs may be able to factor in the funding for expected promotions into their grant applications and that PIs could be made aware of this approach when applying for funds. Liz stated that funders are in fact looking for assurance that researchers are being looked after and so this approach should be welcomed.

Helen Francis raised the question of whether narrative CVs are effective. Liz noted that the Postdoc Academy is going to look into this, for example looking at whether people simply google for a publications list if one has not been included in the narrative CV.

Angeliki Koutsoukou-Argyaki asked whether there are certain criteria for promotion from Research Associate to Senior Research Associate. Liz noted that there are specific criteria which are currently being reviewed. Caroline Stewart stated that current information for promotion to SRA is available on the Department's SRA promotions [website](#) (for which she would welcome any suggestions for improvements from RSF members).

**Action: RSF members**

Caroline also noted that the Head of Department would be willing to come and talk briefly to the RSF about researcher promotions and take questions and comments. It was agreed that this would be a good topic for the next meeting.

## **2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Zohreh Shams and Sergei Skorobogatov.

## **3. Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2021 were approved.

## **4. Report on Actions from the Last Meeting**

### **i. Lecturing Opportunities for Research Staff**

Guidance for post-docs about teaching experience had been circulated widely, and the information has now been included on the [Support for Research](#) website.

### **ii. Communications**

Matt Danish and Andrew Caines had set up a new "research-staff-forum" channel in the "Computer Lab" Slack workspace and publicised the workspace to 'lab-ras' and 'lab-sras-fellows'.

### **iii. Migration of the Hermes email system to the Microsoft Exchange Online system**

Following the migration to the Microsoft Exchange Online system, Forum members discussed the risk of getting locked out of the system if they do not have their phone with them for the multi-factor authentication. It was noted that turning off the multi-factor authentication is not an option as this is decided by the institution; however, UIS can provide a hardware token for generating codes as an additional authentication device.

### **iv. Social events**

(i) Caroline Stewart reported that planning is underway for some departmental social events. Helen Francis noted that there will be department tea in The Street before The Ring (alumni) dinner on 7 April 2022. There will also be an event after the Wheeler Lecture on 18 May 2022.

(ii) Matt Danish reported that there had been a few Happy Hour events recently in The Street. 50-60 people had attended, and the sensors had shown good ventilation (from the open courtyard doors). A sponsor is still being sought to fund the events and, in this regard, Helen Francis suggested that Matt could talk to Ben Karniely, who is responsible for The Supporters Club.

**Action: MRD**

**5. Wellbeing – Departmental Announcements**

There was nothing to report.

**6. Wellbeing – Report for the Wellbeing Committee**

No issues were raised. Caroline Stewart reported that the covid building protocol has been eased, although mask-wearing and lateral flow tests are being maintained for the time being.

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

The B&EC met on 1 February 2022. Matt Danish, Postdoc representative on the B&EC, noted that works to the pedestrian and cycle path in front of the building were currently underway but works to the bike shelter were on hold.

**8. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) – Update**

The Committee is currently in abeyance, with the last meeting held in March 2021.

**9. Any Other Business**

Helen Francis noted that the Department is hosting three events at the Cambridge Festival on 9 April 2022 and hoping to have 10-20 posters in The Street at the same time. Volunteers to help at the events are also sought. If anyone is interested in either providing a poster or volunteering, they should contact Rachel Gardner.

**10. Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be arranged according to the availability of the Head of Department as the intention is for her to join the meeting to talk about SRAs (see item 1 above).

**Action: CB**