UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Faculty of Computer Science & Technology

Post-doc Forum Meeting
Monday 27 November 2017, 12 noon, FW11

Agenda

Membership

David Chisnall	Ekaterina Kochmar
Claire Chapman (Secretary)	Marwa Mahmoud
Daniel Bates	Andy Rice
Matt Danish	Peter Robinson
Alice Hutchings	Caroline Stewart
Stephen Kell (Chair)	Zohreh Shams
Andrea Kells	Noa Zilberman

1. **Apologies**

2. **Minutes of last minutes**
   The minutes from the last meeting held on 3 July 2017 are attached (2017-11-02)

3. **Report on actions from last meeting**

   i.   women@CL member who had not been appointed a mentor – CS

   ii.   RA guidelines on applying for travel/conference funds in exceptional circumstances - CS

   iii. Finance Training for RAs and guidelines on Research Grants for web (2017-11-3iii) – AK

4. **Cycle Parking**
   Members are asked for their views on whether to make 2/3 or 1/2 of the outside bike shelter cycle shelter controlled card access due to a recent bike theft - CS

5. **Following up on the progression of postdocs in the Department (NZ)**

6. **Next Social Event for Mentors and Mentees (SK)**

7. **Any other business**

8. **Date of next meeting**
   To be held in Lent Term.

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Faculty of Computer Science
& Technology

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 if 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.

Financial Guidance for Postdocs

When you find a funder or a scheme that you would like to apply for you need to let the finance office know the funder, the scheme, the scheme notes and when the deadline is and any collaborating partners.

1. X5 Costing

This is the costing tool that the University of Cambridge uses to determine the cost and price of a grant proposal. The X5 will be done by the Finance office and will need to go through departmental approval before being submitted to the Research Operations Office.

2. Directly incurred Costs

Directly Incurred costs are costs that are explicitly identifiable arising from the conduct of the research. These are usually staff, other costs/consumables and travel.

Staff costs

These are costs for Research Assistants (grade 5), Research Associates (Grade 7) and Senior Research Associates (Grade 9). Usually the Department would expect the spine point to be budgeted near the top of the scale to allow for increment and discretionary points. These costs include on-costs that consist of pension contributions and national insurance costs.

Travel

You should always over budget on travel because if you under budget then the sponsor is not going to give you any more funds once the grant is awarded. For example, two conference trips per year per person is justifiable. As a rough guide, a UK or European conference may cost £1,500, a US or Asian conference may cost £2,000-2,500

Other costs

This is another name for consumables, again it is best to over budget rather than under budget.

3. Overheads

These are essential costs that are needed to do the project. They are also known as indirect and estate costs. Some funders that don't pay FEC may have a fixed overhead rate.

Indirect Costs

These are costs that are a necessary part of the costs of undertaking a project. These costs include Finance, Human Resources, Legal, Library Facilities, Registry, Research Operations Office and the University Information Services.

Estate costs

Estate costs are costs which are shared by other activities and projects, based on estimates, and do not represent actual costs on a project-by-project basis, for instance 10% of electricity, 5% of cleaning etc. They cannot be easily identified for one particular project.

4. **PI Time**

The University requires that you put at least 10% of the PI's time on a grant. The Department asks that you put 20% of the PI's time on a grant. If less than this is required then you would need to get permission from the Head of Department.

5. **Other Directly Allocated Costs**

This costing type is mainly used by the Research Councils and the following categories are used:

Computer Officer/ Pooled Labour

In the Computer Lab, these are the people who assist with any technical/network issues that you may incur during the duration of the grant. When applying to Research Councils, eg EPSRC then 10% of a Computer Officer's time should be included in your estimation. This will be done when the X5 is produced.

Research Facilities

These can be Major or Small and are costed as directly allocated costs. In The Lab there is the Cambridge Experimental Use Machines Facility (Caelum).

6. **Collaborating with other departments**

There may be times when you need to collaborate with other departments across the University. If the Computer Lab is the lead then the X5 costing will need to be started by the Lab and then the collaborating departments will be asked to add their costs to that X5. If the Lab is not the lead then the finance office need to wait to be asked to add the lab's figures. Therefore it is the researcher/PI's responsibility to inform the finance office of any proposals involving other departments.

7. **Collaborating with other institutions**

With some proposals you will want to collaborate with other institutions in the UK and around the world. These institutions will need to be added to X5 if they are not already on there. The ROO add new external partners and this is done through filling out a form, which the finance office will do. However, we may need assistance with some of the questions. It is always good to get a spreadsheet of the costs that the other partner has budgeted so this can be forwarded to the Research Operations Office for approval. If we are not leading and we are collaborating with another partner then we would only do a costing for the Cambridge costs.

8. **Writing JOR**

A Justification of Resources (JOR) is required for all applications to the Research Councils. The JOR is where all of the costs in the proposal need to be justified. What staff? Why? What travel? Where? Why? What consumables? Why? If a JOR is not completed clearly and accurately then the proposal may be returned by the Research Council.

9. **Letters of Support from Head of Department**

If you need a Letter of Support from the Head of Department, notify the HOD PA as soon as possible. These letters are generally needed for RCUK Fellowship applications. For any letter of support that needs to be from the VC or PVC then the request needs to be submitted 15 days before the sponsor's deadline.

10. Deadlines or Dept/ROO

The Department requires at least two weeks' notice if an X5 is needed for a Research Grant proposal. If you are aware that you may be thinking about applying for funding then you can let the finance office know earlier than this especially for calls that are complex and require a lot of work. The Research Operations Office needs to receive the proposal and the X5 costing 5 working days before the funder deadline

11. New funder

If you are applying to a funder that has not been used by the University before, then a new funder form will need to be completed by the finance office and then passed on to Research Operations Office to be added to X5, the University's costing tool. This can take a few days so you should include this in your timescale. If it is an international funder then it will need to be referred to International Strategy and this will add to the length of time before it is added to X5.

12. Donations

A company may approach you offering a donation to the Computer Lab. You should be aware that the University policy on donations is that there is a 30% indirect central charge on any staff costs. Also any donation that is over £100,000 needs to be set up as a Research Grant through the Research operations Office. Please speak to finance as soon about this donation and we will advise you accordingly.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Funders:

RCUK – Research Councils, United Kingdom

EPSRC - Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

BBSRC - Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council

ESRC - Economic and Social Research Council

NERC - Natural Environment Research Council

AHRC – Arts and Humanities Research Council

MRC – Medical Research Council

TSB - Technology Strategy Board

DARPA - Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency, USA

NIH – National Institute of Health. USA

EC – European Commission

RAEng - Royal Academy of Engineering

BHF – British Heart Foundation

ATI – Alan Turing Institute

Costing terminology:

X5 – University Costing Tool

fEC – Full Economic Cost

FTE – Full Time Equivalent

DI – Directly Incurred

DA – Directly Allocated

PI – Principal Investigator

Co-I - Co-Investigator

PDRA – Post Doc Research Associate

RA – Research Assistant

UROP – Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme

CO – Computer Officer

SRF – Small Research Facility

PL – Pooled Labour

HoD – Head of Department

DA – Departmental Administrator

ROO – Research Operations Office

RSO – Research Strategy Office

ISO – International Strategy Office

RSM – Research Support Manager

SRSA – Senior Research Support Advisor

RSA – Research Support Advisor

PVC – Pro-Vice Chancellor

CUFS – Cambridge University Finance System

GL – General Ledger