Research Staff Forum Meeting

Wednesday 20 March 2019, 12noon, FW11

Agenda

Membership

Daniel Bates (DB)
Alan Blackwell (AFB)
Claire Chapman (CLC) (Secretary)
Matt Danish (MRD) (Chair)
Heidi Howard (HH)
Ekaterina Kochmar (EK)
Angeliki Koutsoukou-Argyraki (AKA)

Marwa Mahmoud (MMAM)
Andy Rice (ACR)
Zohreh Shams (ZS)
James Sharkey (JPS)
Sergei Skorobogatov (SS)
Caroline Stewart (CS)

1. **Apologies**
    Daniel Bates
    Ekaterina Kochmar
    Zohreh Shams

2. **Minutes of last minutes**
    The minutes from the last meeting held on 21 November 2018 are attached.
    (2019-03-02)

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

    i.   **RA guidelines on applying for travel/conference funds in exceptional circumstances**
         CLC will circulate a link to the Induction Checklist to Forum Members for comments.

         Action: CLC

    ii. **Finance Training for RAs and guidelines on Research Grants for web**
         It was agreed that the Financial Guidelines was a helpful document and it was requested that this be published on the website, with a link to it included on the Induction Checklist.

         Action: CLC

    iii. **Cycle Parking**
         It was agreed CS would seek views at the Wednesday Staff Meeting and invite a small group of staff to discuss and recommend a proposed scheme to the HoD. MRD will give a report regarding his meeting in February with EM.

         Action: CS

iv. **How to improve the Progression of Post-docs beyond their current position in the Department**
A request for a volunteer to set up and create a wiki page should be circulated by email to lab-ras asking for a volunteer to come forward.

   Action: CLC

v. **Suggested links to add to the committee page for resources for research assistants**
If members have any suggestions on resources they would like to add to the committee page, they should send them to CLC.

   Action: Forum Members

vi. **Revising the naming of the Forum and its statement of purpose**
JPS said that as he is representing Research Assistants on the Forum and not the DTG, this should be amended on the website and Research Staff representative poster.

   Action: CLC

vii. **Post Doc training fund**
ACR reported that he will be able to report developments for post-doc training at the School of Technology level at the next meeting.

   Action: ACR

viii. **Lecturing opportunities for RAs, and what the Department might do to facilitate more of them.**
Forum members said the wiki would be a useful way for research staff to indicate their interest in lecturing courses and would like the information to be circulated to lab-ras. CLC will ask Dinah Pounds to action.

   Action: CLC

4. **University's guidelines re Brexit**
An update on the University Brexit Information.

   Action: CS

5. **Researcher Promotion and Postdoc Recognition Feedback**
The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs have asked members for their feedback on the attached questions **(2019-03-05)**

6. **Any other business**

7. **Date of next meeting**
To be held in Easter Term

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Department of Computer Science
& Technology

Minutes of the meeting of the Research Staff Forum held at 12noon on
Wednesday 21 November 2018, in Room FW11, William Gates Building

Present: Daniel Bates (DB)
Claire Chapman (CLC) (Secretary)
Matt Danish (MRD) (Chair)
Ekaterina Kochmar (EK)
Angeliki Koutsoukou-Argyraki (AKA)
Marwa Mahmoud (MMAM)
Andy Rice (ACR)
James Sharkey (JPS)
Caroline Stewart (CS)

1.   Apologies
Alan Blackwell (AFB)
Nathaniel Filardo (NF)
Heidi Howard (HH)
Zohreh Shams (ZS)
Zheng Yuan (ZY)

2.   Minutes of last minutes
The minutes from the last meeting held on 20 June 2018 were approved.

3.   Report on actions from last meeting

i.   **RA guidelines on applying for travel/conference funds in exceptional circumstances**
The sentence 'Requests for travel funds can be made at any time to the Department Secretary and awarded at the discretion of the Department' has been added to the Induction Checklist. CLC will circulate a link to the Induction Checklist to Forum Members for comments.

   Action: CLC

ii.   **Finance Training for RAs and guidelines on Research Grants for web**
It was agreed that the Financial Guidelines was a helpful document and it was requested that this be published on the website, with a link to it included on the Induction Checklist.

   Action: CLC

iii. **Cycle Parking**
MRD reported that there is still ongoing debate as to what adjustment to the cycle shelter will be agreed and who will fund the project. CS reported that the changes are needed due to the commitment to improve cycle safety for the site before the Cavendish III development is completed.
Addendum: The Cavendish III completion date is set to be 2021/22.

It was agreed CS would seek views at the Wednesday Staff Meeting and invite a small group of staff to discuss and recommend a proposed scheme to the HoD. MRD said that a report needs to be submitted to EM by the end of December.

Action: CS

iv. **How to improve the Progression of Post-docs beyond their current position in the Department**
No volunteer from the forum has come forward to set up a Wiki page. ACR suggested that as 78% of research staff said they would find this helpful in the Career Progression Survey, we should circulate an email to lab-ras asking for a volunteer to set up and edit a wiki.

Action: CLC

v. **Suggested links to add to the committee page for resources for research assistants**
If members have any suggestions on resources they would like to add to the committee page, they should send them to CLC.

Action: Forum Members

vi. **Admissions Selection help for Directors of Studies**
A list of all attendees has been sent to reception and to Directors of Studies.

vii. **Revising the naming of the Forum and its statement of purpose**
JPS said that as he is representing Research Assistants on the Forum and not the DTG, this should be amended on the website and Research Staff representative poster.

Action: CLC

viii. **Post Doc training fund**
ACR reported that he will be able to report developments for post-doc training at the School of Technology level at the next meeting. If research staff require funding to attend events, then they should get in touch with him to see if the Researcher Development Fund can provide funds, although funding is currently limited.

Action: ACR

ix. **Researcher Development Fund**
ACR reported that the Researcher Development Fund budget has been cut and this will impact both graduate students and research staff.

Language training is very expensive to fund so it can only be funded for career development. All requests should be sent to Lise Gough.

x. **Lecturing opportunities for RAs, and what the Department might do to facilitate more of them.**
Forum members said the wiki would be a useful way for research staff to indicate their interest in lecturing courses and would like the information to be circulated to lab-ras. CLC will ask Dinah Pounds to action.

   Action: CLC

4. **Voting for Post Docs on governing body**
MRD reported that the university policy has changed so that Research Staff who have less than 3 years continuous service are stripped of their voting rights. Alice Hutchings had resigned from the Council as a result of the amended grace and is seeking legal advice to ascertain if this in breach of employment law. Sam Ainsworth is standing for election on the council and CS suggested he should circulate details of this to voting members of the Department to ask for their support. MRD added that the amended grace does not take effect until next year so there were quite a few research staff who could still use their vote for the Council elections.

   Action: MRD

5. **Any other business**
AKA asked about the University's plan after Brexit. CS said that she had circulated an email from the University regarding the EU Settlement Scheme pilot for EU staff working in higher education. An application will need to be made by EU citizens in order to apply for UK immigration status under the EU Settlement Scheme. As the application can only be made on an Android phone or tablet, a department device will be made available and CS will circulate details once it is in operation.

   Action: CS

   Researcher Development Pitch
The OPdA are organising a Researcher Development Pitch Competition and inviting all post docs to design a programme or tool which will help their fellow post docs to enhance their skills. It was agreed this information should be circulated to lab-ras and lab-sras.

   Action: CLC

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

Researcher Promotions Feedback

As discussed at the previous meeting, we would like to use feedback from you and your committees to contribute to the upcoming review of the researcher promotion system by University HR. At the meeting there will be a brief explanation of the system as it currently stands and some headline suggestions for improvements that could be put forward. Based on your feedback at the meeting and to the questions below, the Chair and Vice-Chairs will prepare a paper on this subject to put forward to HR Committee and the Postdoctoral Matters Committee as the relevant bodies of University governance to consider improvements. To this end, any information you can provide before or after the meeting will be very useful to strengthen the arguments for change:

1. Does your Department or School provide open guidance on the system for promotion from Research Associate to Senior Research Associate? If yes, please provide link
2. Are you aware of rules and procedures applied by your Department or School to the system of promotion from RA to SRA that are not advertised?
3. Can you give any examples or information about the application of the procedure which illustrates how it is working in practice in your Department or School?
4. Do you feel that the opportunity for promotion from RA to SRA gives sufficient opportunity for progression? Can you give any examples of types of progression in responsibility or independence which researchers in your Department have achieved which have not merited application for promotion to SRA?
5. Are you aware of any successful promotions in your Department from SRA to Principal Research Associate? Are you aware of any unsuccessful applications for this promotion? If so please supply as much detail as possible.

Some links you might find useful if you are not already aware of them are:
Headline HR guidance about researcher promotions, template Research Associate role profile, template Senior Research Associate role profile, existing Senior Researcher Promotions system, example of Departmental guidance on promotion from RA to SRA (Computer Lab)

Postdoc Recognition Feedback

Similarly we would like your feedback in order to develop suggestions for improving opportunities for recognition for postdocs.

1. Does your Department or School have any kind of prize or award specifically to recognise excellent contributions by postdoc research staff?
2. Are you aware of postdoc research staff in your Department who have been recognised by existing University schemes, e.g. Vice Chancellor's Awards or Pilkington Prize?
3. Would you support the introduction of specific categories in existing schemes or the creation of a specific scheme intended to recognise excellent contributions by postdoc research staff?
4. Do you have any suggestions about how any such scheme should work, e.g. what it should recognise specifically, criteria, how to make it relevant to postdocs in different disciplines and different contexts (e.g. lab/group-based v. single researchers)?
5. Does your Department advertise or provide open guidance on the Contribution Increments for Researchers scheme?